IMPERIALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMININITY IN MID-VICTORIAN FICTION

By

AERON HAYNIE

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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By

Aeron Haynie

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Chairman: Elizabeth Langland
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This dissertation examines how representations of colonialism and imperialism permeate those literary genres marked as "feminine": the domestic and the sensation novels of the mid-Victorian period. I argue that both domestic and sensation novels of the eighteen-sixties employ colonization as a metaphor which represents female ambition, sexuality, and authority, as well as a way to explore socioeconomic concerns of bigamy, "the surplus woman," and female emigration. Central to these concerns is the issue of female (over-)production, or the anxiety of excess.

In each of the novels discussed, the heroine's domestic authority is implicated within a discourse of imperialism. In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novel Lady Audley's Secret, the

(anti)heroine's social position is achieved through a metaphoric colonization of the Audley family. In Margaret Oliphant's short story "The Doctor's Family," the heroine is constructed as an embodiment of colonial (Australian) femininity. Both Charlotte Brontë's novel Jane Eyre and Rhoda Broughton's novel 'Cometh Up as a Flower represent the battle for domestic power as a struggle between despotic ruler and rebel slave. In George Eliot's Felix Holt, the feminine authority of Mrs. Transome is effaced by the return of her son, a colonial entrepreneur.

My dissertation focuses on novelists who were immensely popular and, therefore, considered "hack" writers, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Margaret Oliphant, and Rhoda Broughton, as well as writers such as George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë. In part, this dissertation attempts to trouble the distinction between the author-as-producer and the author-as-artist, a distinction in which gender plays an important role. My readings of the novels suggest that the authors were very much aware of their status as producers of popular or "literary" texts and that issues of (over)production, commodification, and excess inform the texts' constructions of femininity.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Early "post-colonial" criticism has focused on the ways that "adventure" novels, fiction set in the British colonies or works overtly concerned with colonialism, can be read as sustaining a discourse of imperialism.[1] Representations of colonialism and imperialism not only exist in the fiction of Kipling and Haggard, but also permeate those literary genres marked as "feminine": the domestic and the sensation novels of the mid-Victorian period. That "feminine" novels use a "discourse of imperialism"--a term I discuss below--to address issues of domestic or emotional economies suggests that this "discourse" is not containable and that it must be examined, even in the most unlikely sites.

In each of the novels I discuss, the heroine's domestic authority is implicated within a discourse of imperialism: In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862), Lady Audley's social position is achieved through a metaphoric colonization of the Audley family; in Margaret Oliphant's The Doctor's Family (1863), Nettie Underwood is constructed as an embodiment of colonial (Australian) femininity; both Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847) and Rhoda Broughton's 'Cometh Up as a Flower (1867) represent the battle for domestic power as a struggle between despotic ruler and rebel slave; and in George

Eliot's Felix Holt (1866), the feminine authority of Mrs. Transome is effaced by the return of her son, a colonial entrepreneur.

My project moves beyond the traditional approach of demonstrating how literary texts equate femininity with colonized land/people;[2] instead, I argue that both "sensational" and domestic novels of the eighteen-sixties employ colonization as a metaphor which represents female ambition, sexuality, and authority, as well as a way to explore socioeconomic concerns of bigamy, "the surplus woman," and female emigration. Central to these concerns is the issue of female (over-)production, or the "anxiety of excess."

The Discourse of Colonialism

I use the term "discourse" to indicate what Paul Bové, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, defines as "the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought. . . . Discourse makes possible disciplines and institutions which, in turn, sustain and distribute those discourses" (Bové 54-5). By suggesting that there is a "discourse of colonialism" I am drawing on Edward Said's analysis of "orientalist discourse" in which he includes all texts about the Orient and which he defines as a "systematic

discipline by which European culture was able to manage--even to produce--the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (Said, Orientalism, 3).

The "discourse of colonialism" indicates the myriad ways in which colonialism is represented and the dialectical relationship between official reports, government policy, and literary representations of the colonial project. I am aware that by using the terms "colonial" or "imperialist discourse" I suggest a Foucaultian "panopticon" that subsumes counter or contradictory discourses while preserving the basic power structures.[3] [4] Although my argument does assume that sites which are coded as personal or "feminine"--the domestic space, the body, sexuality--exist within an ideology of Victorian imperialism and that the domestic or feminine space exists within the context of imperialism, this does not deny the possibility of subversion/resistance within that domestic space (or by the colonized). I am not proposing that a "discourse of colonialism" is homogeneous or that it operates as a unified force. Foucault's use of discourse, based on his model of power as operating through multiple sites, has been criticized by feminist critics as offering no possibility for resistance.[5] My project is less concerned with determining whether certain Victorian texts offer moments of resistance to ideologies of imperialism, than with examining how novels written by women in the mid-Victorian period negotiate

competing discourses of nineteenth-century colonialism, Victorian middle-class domesticity, and codes of femininity.

I use the term "domestic fiction" to designate what Tania Modleski (rather loosely) describes as "novels which center around women's activities in the home" (Modleski 16). She distinguishes "domestic novels" from "sentimental novels," which focus on young women defending their virginities, and from "sensational novels," which represent a destabilized family situation.[6] The chief concern of domestic fiction is maintaining the home; domestic novels often portray "strong women who . . . must struggle to keep intact the worlds which the weakness and unreliablility of men threaten to undermine" (Modleski 23). In Desire and Domestic Fiction, Nancy Armstrong uses the term in a broader context to describe representations of a middle-class ideology, one which privileged the "more subtle nuances of behavior" over birth or title (Armstrong 4).[7] However, while I agree with Armstrong's central argument--that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries middle-class women gained exclusive authority in the domestic realm in exchange for yielding political control--I will argue that representations of the domestic space should not be read solely as signifying a middle-class ideology, but must be read as existing within a context of imperialism. Domestic fiction, although situated securely within the national space and contained even further within the feminized sphere of the home, is still implicated in the British imperial project.

Representations of ninteenth-century middle-class femininity are constructed in opposition to the colonial other.

All of the novels discussed in this work are set within a domestic space, although only Margaret Oliphant's novel The Doctor's Family and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre are generally classified as "domestic novels." Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret and Rhoda Broughton's 'Cometh Up as a Flower are both examples of "sensational novels," and Eliot's Felix Holt is usually categorized as a "realist novel" or "political novel." Yet, a central concern portrayed in each of the novels is the struggle for authority within the domestic space, a struggle that is described using the language of colonialism. Each novel describes an attempt by the heroine to seize and maintain legal, moral or financial control over a household economy; the heroine's actions are described as "despotic," "imperial," and she is likened to a "rebel slave," "empress," or "sovereign." These novels describe their heroines as both the colonizers and colonized (at times within the same text).[8] Female characters occupy an ambigious place in the colonial project, and this dissertation explores the myriad ways that these novels employ the language of colonialism to represent female ambition, sexuality and violence.

Significantly, each of the heroines discussed are motherless when their stories begin and are desperately in need of male protection.[9] The absence of female role models

suggests that these heroines are forced to construct new feminine social roles; in addition, the ineffectual (or absent) fathers in these texts could signal a failure in patriarchal protection.[10] Their precarious domestic situations suggest that the novels are reflecting mid-Victorian concerns over the plight of the single woman.

The Problem of the Surplus Woman

The popular conception that there were "surplus women"--unmarried women who had no means of employment--was substantiated by official government reports, such as the 1851 Census, which reported that "forty-two per cent of women between the ages of twenty and forty were unmarried" (Poovey 4). In the eighteen-fifties and the eighteen-sixties, many popular journals contained debates on the various solutions for this perceived overabundance of women (Greg, 140). Some (feminist) reformers argued that women needed easier access to the work place, while others, such as W.R. Greg, argued that working women were a perversion of the natural order: "[Single women] not having the natural duties and labors of wives and mothers, have to carve out artificial and painfully sought occupations . . . [and] lead an independent and incomplete existence" (Greg, 136).

Greg offered a pragmatic solution to the supposed surplus of single women; he proposed that one third of the

single women emigrate to the colonies, one third enter domestic service and the remaining third, now relatively scarce, would thereby be more valuable. Implicit in his argument is the idea that emigration would reduce the number of women available for prostitution, forcing men to "either live without all that a woman can bestow, or to purchase it in the recognized mode--. . . marriage" (Greg, 139). Thus, according to Greg's analysis, the "excess" of single women is credited with creating, or at least enabling, vice. In addition, the language Greg uses to describe the situation of single women--"abnormal," "unwholesome," "artificial," "incomplete," "evil," and an "anomaly" (Greg 136-7)--is curiously similar to descriptions of the sensation novel heroines.[11] This notion of feminine "excess" as unnatural and implicitly criminal becomes a central issue in the representation of heroines in mid-nineteenth-century women's novels. However, the "artificiality" and superfluousness of single women and the specter of the colonies as a convenient dumping ground for these "redundant" women informs the construction of femininity in domestic novels as well.

The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Colonialism

I have focused almost exclusively on novels of the eighteen-sixties, although issues of colonialism are apparent in literature before and after this period.[12] However, the

Sepoy rebellion, or "mutiny" of British colonies in India 1857, and, perhaps less obviously, the American Civil War of 1861-5 both foregrounded questions of race and othering in the British national consciousness, and I argue that these issues are implicitly represented in British domestic novels.[13]

On May 10, 1857--which marked the centennial of British rule in India--Indian sepoys (soldiers) in Meerut mutinied against their officers, and a series of uprisings spread throughout northern India. Initially, the "mutiny" was met with disbelief by the British; the colonial stereotype of the loyal Indian subject prohibited their imagining the possibility of widespread, popular revolt. Consequently, early accounts of the uprising suggested that the rebellion was scattered and based on rumor and Indian religious superstitions. Yet, most significant was the fact that accounts of the uprising focused on detailed descriptions of the mutilation, torture, rape, and enslavement of innocent Englishwomen.[14] Jenny Sharpe, in her recent book, Allegories of Empire, argues that fetishizing the violated bodies of Englishwomen is a move which both effaces the destabilizing images of massacred British soldiers and also posits English women as the signifier of (abused) colonialism:

> the *English lady* circulates as a sign for the moral superiority of colonialism under the threat of native insurrection. The slippage between the violation of English women as the object of rape and the violation of colonialism as the object of rebellion permits the moral value of the domestic woman--her self-sacrifice, duty, and devotion--to be extended to the social mission of colonialism.[15]

In addition, these exaggerated reports of violence against Englishwomen legitimized British "retaliatory" violence, and in fact, explained such violence as a response to Indian brutality. Thus, the violence inherent within colonialism was effaced and projected onto the figure of the lascivious, barbaric Indian, while, at the same time, the object of colonial violence became the defiled bodies of Englishwomen. As Sharpe points out, the trope of the violated Englishwoman did not exist before the "Mutiny," and this suggests that although the 1857 uprising was not the first instance of colonial rebellion, it was pivotal in marking a crisis in colonial authority.

Sharpe's work focuses on how (official and fictional) narratives about the 1857 uprising both legitimized colonial violence and effaced representations of the Indian woman.[16] However, my project is interested in how the reports and dramatizations of the 1857 uprising affected British domestic novels in which the colonial situation is not represented explicitly: does the trope of Englishwomen as signifiers of colonial authority infuse domestic or sensational novels of the 1860s? I argue that the events of 1857 had an enormous impact on the British national consciousness and in particular on the role of women within the imperial project. However, the novels do not offer one homogeneous response to this crisis in colonialism; rather, they show the differing ways that issues in colonialism are domesticated and feminized.

Although reports of the Mutiny represent Englishwomen as passive objects of Indian brutality, the issue of British women's agency in the imperial project is more complicated. On November 1, 1858, one year after the uprising, administrative control of India was transferred from the East India Company to Queen Victoria.[17] This change in colonial administrative power symbolizes the shift from "informal" or commercial imperialism to the annexation of formal political control over colonies.[18] Yet, it is also suggestive that this crisis in colonial authority, which was represented or imagined as located in the feminine domestic sphere, was resolved (in part) by the establishment of a female-centered rule.

Much recent "postcolonial" criticism has expanded the body of texts that can be read as constructed by, and contributing to, the discourses of imperialism (including travel literature, journalism, conduct books, children's literature, and domestic novels).[19] It is particularly suggestive that discussions of imperialism and literature have been recontextualized to include texts whose feminine, domestic subjects marked them as explicitly removed from the foreign, the exotic, or the colonial.

The necessity of reading canonical works of British literature within a context of imperialism was first voiced in Gayatri Spivak's 1985 essay "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." The essay interrogates the tacit ideology of imperialism in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, Jean

Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Most important for my project is Spivak's argument that Jane Eyre, a work which generally has been read as championing the individualist subjectivity of a marginalized heroine, is predicated upon an "ideology of imperialist axiomatics."[20] Spivak insists that imperialism informs not only literary representations of the exotic or colonial Other, but is also "a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English."[21] I will briefly outline Spivak's reading of Jane Eyre here, because her analysis is central to my own argument that the discourse of colonialism informs novels that are ostensibly bound within the (British) domestic space.

Spivak argues that Jane Eyre begins in a socially marginalized position at the Reeds--she is the unwanted orphan within a "legal family"; yet Jane Eyre's power or subversiveness lies in her ability to establish a "counter-family" in each domestic situation.[22] Spivak argues that the marriage of Jane and Rochester, which establishes a "family-in-law" and thereby grants Jane the social legitimacy she was denied in each preceding domestic situation, is grounded upon the violence of colonialism.[23] However, Spivak's article fails to address the implications of representing the colonial venture within the feminine, domestic space. In addition, the novel presents Jane's narration as a feminine method of self-fashioning: Brontë's heroine refuses to accept her socially marginalized position(s), and the novel naturalizes Jane's

ambition by investing her with a moral value that transcends the social order. Thus, instead of arguing that Jane Eyre's connection to imperialism is based on her marriage to Rochester, I argue that Jane Eyre, as well as the other heroines I discuss, achieve their own metaphoric imperial venture which echoes the heroes' ill-fated colonial adventuring.

In his recent work Culture and Imperialism (1993), Edward Said extends the paradigm of "orientalism"--that eastern literature presents the "east" as a set of recurring tropes/stereotypes, which both essentialize and dichotomize the eastern other--and considers how the discourse of imperialism informs canonical texts whose subject matter is British domesticity. Most notably, in his discussion of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, he argues that "Austen reveals herself to be assuming . . . the importance of an empire to the situation at home" (89).[24] My own project builds on the connections that Said and Spivak have made between the domestic/interior space and the ideology of the British empire.[25] Yet, while Said's analysis of Mansfield Park seeks to uncover unspoken economic connections between the Bertram estate and Sir Thomas's sugar plantations in the West Indies,[26] I am concerned with how the "male" colonial project is appropriated and used as a metaphor to express issues of feminine agency and desire.

In discussing the novels' representations of female desire, it is important not to posit an essential, pre-existing sexuality-as-truth, which my analyses then rescue or recover. Based on the theories of Foucault, my project assumes that discourses of sexuality are historically constructed and that representations of sexuality determine a knowledge of sexuality.[27] My project investigates how a discourse of colonialism is used to represent female desire. For example, in chapter three, I examine how the figure of the exotic or colonized other is used to define the white/western heroine's sexuality. However, only two of the texts that I address, Broughton's 'Cometh Up as a Flower and Eliot's Felix Holt, present female desire in sexual terms; in these novels both heroines suffer drastic punishments for admitting to a sexual desire outside of their marriages.[28] Thus, in these two texts, feminine sexual desire is represented as a de-stabilizing force which cannot be contained within the boundaries of domesticity. Yet in each novel the heroine's ambition to control her domestic space is encoded as an unnatural desire.

The representation of female desire becomes more complicated in both Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret and in Oliphant's story "The Doctor's Family," in which the heroines are marked by a lack of sexual desire. Lady Audley's lack of sexual desire is coded as abnormal, even criminal; however, her lack of desire works to make her the object of desire.[29] Yet, it is not just Lady Audley's lack of sexual (or romantic)

desire that is coded as threatening in the novel, it is her intense social ambition, her desire to appropriate the Audley wealth. The novel suggests that, if not tempered by the codes of romantic love, a woman's desire for domestic authority is violently criminal and in fact, insane. In Oliphant's story, Nettie Underwood illustrates the separation of female sexual desire from a desire for domestic authority. Nettie refuses to acknowledge that she could be the object of romantic/sexual desire, and she willingly gives up her own romantic desires in order to maintain her domestic authority. Nettie is characterized as wanting absolute control over her sister's family, a control that is represented as imperialistic. The conventions of romantic fiction require that Nettie abdicate her command and establish a more proper sovereignty over her own family with Dr. Rider.[30] Yet the punishments that these two heroines receive for desiring domestic authority do not efface the power of their portrayals.

In my readings of the novels, I examine the ways that female desire is represented as transgressing the domestic space. I do not posit female sexual desire as an essential, a prior quality which is then channelled or sublimated into other forms, such as domestic authority, social ambition, or violence. Rather, I wish to problematize the divisions between these forms of desire. My analysis of the representations of desire relies on a Lacanian definition of desire as that which

is "always displaced, always deferred, and [which] reappears endlessly in another guise" (Meltzer 160).

I have chosen to examine mid-nineteenth-century novels written by women (both "popular" and "literary"); however, as should now be clear, my aim is not to suggest that gender somehow transgresses the discourse of imperialism, but rather to tease out the ways that gender negotiates within that discourse. Although my project questions the "space" that gender occupies within the discourse of imperialism, I am unwilling to assume that gender provides an automatic escape out of this discourse. In part, I am questioning the arguments of Mary Louise Pratt and Sara Mills, whose works seem to privilege a feminine discursive space where eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women writers could establish an "organic" relationship with the exotic. In Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, Mary Louise Pratt argues that certain writers, such as Mary Kingsley and Richard Wright, transcend the imperialism of their culture because their gender and race allow them a privileged position by which to write about the exotic other.[31] In Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonization, Sara Mills similarly maintains that since women traveler's texts stress personal involvement and, therefore, were not allowed the authority of masculine colonial discourse, they provide "counter-hegemonic voices" that resist generalizations about the other.[32] I argue that gender, although it is an important point of negotiation,

does not preclude a text from reflecting the discourse of colonialism. To argue otherwise would be to assume that women writers exist outside of their culture's ideology.[33]

However, this project does not focus on the explicit representation of the other/foreign/exotic that travel literature proposes, but instead investigates how mid-Victorian domestic and "sensational" novels written by women implicitly enact the colonial project. My argument is indebted to the recent work of Firdous Azim, who connects the rise of the novel to the history of colonialism. She argues that the feminine adventures of Roxana and Pamela are not a break from male adventure novels but, in fact, are a continuation of the colonizing, foreign enterprises of Robinson Crusoe:

> The leap from Robinson Crusoe (1719) to Pamela (1740-1) or Clarissa (1748-9) marks the transition of the novel into the more domestic and homely domain. This is not to say that excitement and adventure are eschewed, but that they are transferred into the sexual terrain, and by making the female protagonist and the female narrator central to the discourse, the status and position of women and sexuality become increasingly the main concerns of the novel. . . . Again, the shift to the domestic does not keep the novel confined within familiar structures: the realm of the domestic is extended to show how even familiarity can be rendered strange, exciting and dangerous. (Azim 61)

In the above quotation, Firdous Azim indicates a significant shift in the British novel--from representations of the exotic as a male adventure narrative to a feminized and subsequently domesticated enactment of colonization. Azim argues, through readings of Roxana and the novels of Charlotte Brontë, that the development of female subjectivity in eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century novels cannot be read outside of the discourse of imperialism.

Yet, while domestic novels "feminized" colonial themes, the genre of the novel itself, particularly the popular novel, was seen as feminine.[34] I have purposely selected novelists who were immensely popular and, therefore, considered non-literary or "hack" writers, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Margaret Oliphant, and Rhoda Broughton.[35] However, in order to complicate the division between "literary" and "hack," between art and commodity, I have also included writers, such as George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë, who did not position themselves as producers of mass commodities. In part, I wish to trouble the distinction between the author-as-producer and the author-as-artist, a distinction in which gender plays an important role. I argue in my readings of the novels that the authors were very much aware of their status as producers of popular or "literary" texts and that issues of (over) production, commodification, and excess inform the texts' constructions of femininity.

Both popular novels and women were perceived in terms of excess and were devalued as commodities within a capitalist market. My argument assumes a Marxist position which connects the development of capitalism to the expansion of colonial markets.[36] If these novels are viewed as examples of "commodity culture," then their use of the colonial or exotic can be read as an appropriation or importation of new

material, which is then used to reenergize the formula of domestic fiction. Thus, domestic or sensational fiction's use of colonial themes enacts capitalism's need to extract raw materials from colonial markets.

In chapter 2, "Gold Miners and Gold-diggers: the Female Schemer as Imperial Adventurer in Lady Audley's Secret," I discuss how this sensation novel, whose explicit plot revolves around the detection of feminine criminality, implicitly addresses anxieties of excess, which are expressed in the novel's representations of bigamy, the "surplus woman," and (over)production. I argue that "Lady Audley"/Helen Maldon, the (anti-)heroine of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novel, represents a domestication and feminization of the imperial adventure that George Talboys enacts when he makes his fortune in the Australian gold mines. Lady Audley acts out a symbolic version of the colonial conquest, one in which marriage figures as the colonial marketplace; she invents a new identity, seeks out fresh, lawless territory, invades the Audley family, appropriates the Audley title and wealth, and ultimately uses violence to maintain this rule. The violence in the novel, instead of an illustration of repressed feminine rage, is read as an expression of the violence that imperialism legitimizes. I situate my analysis of the novel within the context of nineteenth-century social issues such as female emigration to Australia, English marriage laws and bigamy, and women as producers and consumers of mass culture.

The intersection between the discourse of colonialism and domestic ideology is further explored in my third chapter, "The Disempowering of the Female Colonist: Margaret Oliphant's The Doctor's Family." Here, I discuss how the characterization of Nettie Underwood, a "colonial girl" who is financially independent and, in fact, supports her sister's family, subverts the trope of the "superfluous" single woman.[37] Nettie's ideology of domestic duty privileges self-sacrifice and familial obligation over romantic love (until the conventional romantic resolution); however, her hyper-efficiency justifies her illegitimate seizure of authority within her sister's family and is linked to the rhetoric of the "white man's burden." In addition, the arrival of the Rider family into the closed community of Carlingford represents what Stephen Arata has termed the "anxiety of reverse colonization."[38] Although Arata's essay focuses on Bram Stoker's Dracula, his argument that the presence of a powerful, energetic non-English character performs a "colonization of the body," which in some sense revitalizes his English victims, can be applied to the representations of the other or colonized in earlier British fiction. For example, in Oliphant's novel, Nettie's imported "colonial" energies serve to revitalize and remasculinize what the text presents as Edward Rider's bleak and unsatisfying bachelor life. Thus, the intrusion of the foreign or colonial is presented as necessary for the fulfillment of the

domestic/romantic ideal. The essential incoherence in Oliphant's text lies in the contradictory ways that the figure of the "extra" woman is used to represent both the colonizer and the colonized, and this ambiguity signals a larger tension concerning the role of women in the imperial project.

Chapter 4, "The Construction of Female Sexuality and the Discourse of Imperialism in Jane Eyre and 'Cometh Up as a Flower," discusses how Jane Eyre and Nelly Le Strange offer representations of "English" femininity, which are defined against the figure of a sexualized, "orientalized"/nonwhite other. Gayatri Spivak and Suvendrini Perera have identified the political implications of defining the western woman's subjectivity against the nonwestern woman's perceived lack of autonomy.[39] Both texts employ what Suvendrini Perera terms "the language of orientalist misogyny"--using images of despotism, seraglio, and sati to illustrate western women's oppression; yet, this "identification" works to differentiate the western woman from the orientalized female subject. However, I move beyond a discussion of how the discourse of imperialism informs the heroines' sexuality to examine how this discourse complicates the struggle for domestic authority in each novel. It seems significant that both texts contain heroes for whom colonial adventuring results in tragedy (i.e., Rochester's supposed victimization in the West Indies and Major M'Gregor's death in India) and who must be feminized before a romantic union can be achieved.

The failure of colonial adventure as an alternative course or method for the younger or disinherited son to recoup his lost wealth and status is a motif which occurs in all of the texts I address, but which is foregrounded most prominently in George Eliot's Felix Holt. I discuss the novel in terms of its characterization of Harold Transome, the prodigal son and wealthy colonial businessman, particularly how his colonial experience marks him as incompatible with the feminine, domestic economies of his mother and Esther Lyon. I examine the ways that the text portrays the colonial adventure as having contaminated Harold Transome; this "contamination"--signified by his nonwhite son--culminates in the revelation of his illegitimacy.

Finally, what are the implications of reading these novels in terms of how they express issues of colonialism and imperialism? The purpose of reading within the context of colonialism is not to reduce the complex issues in the texts to flat expressions of the imperialist project; rather, my readings show the heterogeneity in the way that mid-Victorian women's fiction responds to and negotiates within the discourse of imperialism. Insisting that these "feminine" texts be read as employing a discourse of imperialism works to complicate the division between the domestic and the international and compels the reader to acknowledge that these texts exist within a political and historical context.

Notes

1. The most notable examples of criticism which treat colonialism as a theme are Martin Green's Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire (1979) and Patrick Brantlinger's Rule of Darkness: Imperialism and British Literature (1984), both of which analyze texts--by, for example, Defoe, Kipling, and Conrad--that depend upon imperialistic language and ideology.

2. The trope of the woman as conquered or conquerable territory (and the concurrent eroticization of foreign landscape) exists in literature from the 17th century poetry of John Donne to the 20th century prose of Hemingway:

> Licence my roving hands, and let them goe
> Behind, before, above, between, below.
> Oh my America, my new found lande,
> My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd.
> My myne of precious stones, my Empiree,
> How blest am I in this discovering thee.
> -- John Donne, "Elegie: To His Mistris Going to Bed"

Also see Judith Williamson's article, "Woman is an Island," for an analysis of the ways in which women are used in advertising to represent difference: "Our culture, deeply rooted in imperialism, needs to destroy genuine difference, to capture what is beyond its reach; at the same time it constructs difference in order to signify itself at all. . . . the main vehicle for this representation [is] 'Woman'" (Williamson 100-101).

3. There is not, on one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy. (Foucault, History of Sexuality vol.1 100)

4. The idea of the "panopticon" derives from the nineteenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham's model of a prison, built in a circle, in which the prisoners are always under possible surveillance. Foucault uses this model to describe the operation of power wherein each individual, aware that they could be under the gaze of those in power, internalizes the codes of behavior and disciplines himself.

5. See Judith Newton's article, "Historicisms New and Old: Charles Dickens' Meets Marxism, Feminism, and West Coast Foucault." Here, she challenges D.A. Miller's Foucauldian reading of Bleak House, arguing that it precludes the possibility of resistance. Yet, as Ann Cvetkovich recommends, "It is important to distinguish between a critique of the Victorian novel and a critique of resistance. The Victorian novel need not be defended in order to guarantee the possibility of resistance" (Cvetkovich, 40-41).

6. However, critics such as Nina Baym have argued that "domestic fiction" does not portray the domestic situation as idyllic:

> Home life is presented, overwhelmingly, as unhappy. There are very few intact families in this literature, and those that are intact are unstable or locked into routines of misery. Domestic tasks are arduous and monotonous; family members oppress and abuse each other; social interchanges are alternately insipid or malicious. (Baym 27)

7. Armstrong argues that "domestic fiction" produced an ideology of the domestic woman, that it "mapped out a new domain of discourse as it invested common forms of social behavior with the emotional values of woman" (Armstrong 29).

8. See my discussion in chapter 5 of Eliot's Felix Holt in which I discuss how Mrs. Transome is represented an "imperial" sovereign but later is described as "colonized" by her son, Harold Transome.

9. Lady Audley's mother died when Lady Audley was a young girl; Nettie Underwood's mother is never mentioned in the story; Nelly Le Strange's mother died before the novel begins; Jane Eyre is an orphan; Esther Lyon does not even know the identity of her dead mother until the novel's end.

10. Lady Audley's father is a penniless drunk; Nettie Underwood's father is never mentioned; Nelly Le Strange's father is bankrupt; Jane Eyre's father is dead; Esther Lyon finds out that Reverend Lyon is not her biological father.

11. See Margaret Oliphant's review of sensation novels in Blackwood's Magazine and E.S. Dallas's review in Gay Science.

12. The exception to my focus on novels of the eighteen-sixties is Jane Eyre (1847), which I discuss because it has become almost an archetype of how the domestic novel engages the issues of imperialism.

13. Britain's dependence upon imported raw materials, including cotton from the southern states for use in its textile industries, complicates its abolitionist stance.

14. One contemporary account of Indian violence comes from Colin Campbell's Narrative of the Indian Revolt from its Outbreak to the Capture of Lucknow (London: George Victers, 1858).

> Wives were stripped in the presence of their husbands' eyes, flogged naked through the city, violated there in the public streets, and then murdered. To cut off the breasts of the women was a favorite mode of

> eyes, flogged naked through the city, violated there in the public streets, and then murdered. To cut off the breasts of the women was a favorite mode of dismissing them to death; and, most horrible, they were sometimes scalped . . . (20)

15. Jenny Sharpe, Allegories of Empire, 68.

16. In his recent work British Social History 1815-1906 (1991), Norman McCord states that the "repressive measures adopted during the suppression of the Mutiny by the British were welcomed by a British public fully informed of the conduct of the **more savage** mutineers" (emphasis mine), suggesting the tenacity of justifications of British colonial violence.

17. Queen Victoria's dominion over India culminated in 1877 when she was crowned "Empress of India."

18. In The Lion's Share, historian Bernard Porter divides the history of British imperialism into two stages: the "informal empire" of the mid-nineteenth century (sometimes referred to as "spheres of influence") and formal annexation. He argues that the increase in formal colonization by Britain was a symptom of Britain's internal economic troubles and world-wide political decline. He maintains that Britain's "informal empire" did not have an explicit overall logic (or agenda), but rather adapted to local conditions.

19. Sara Mills, The Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism (1991); Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Literature and Transculturation (1992);Jenny Sharpe, Allegories of Empire: The Figure of the Woman in the Colonial Text (1993); Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (1993); Firdous Azim, The Colonial Rise of the Novel (1993); Suvendrini Perera, Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens (1991); and David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration (1993).

20. Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," 267.

21. Spivak, 262.

22. For example, at the Brocklehursts, Jane, Miss Temple, and Helen Burns form a feminine "counter-family." Later, at Thornfield, Jane and Rochester's proposed union is an "illicit family" in opposition to his legal marriage to Bertha Mason. Thus, these "counter-families" are only temporary solutions to Jane's social marginalization.

23. The violence of colonialism is represented in the novel both by Rochester's appropriation of the wealth of Bertha Mason, a West Indian heiress, and by her fiery death, which frees Rochester to marry Jane.

24. Said argues that the casual mentioning of colonial territories in Mansfield Park is significant, contending that just as the Bertram estate is maintained by wealth from a West Indian plantation, so, too, the domestic novel upholds and supports the ideology of imperialism:

> To earn the right to Mansfield Park you must first leave home as a kind of indentured servant, or . . . as a kind of transported commodity--this, clearly, is the fate of Fanny and her brother William--but then you have the promise of future wealth. I think Austen sees what Fanny does as a domestic or small-scale movement that corresponds to the larger, more openly colonial movements of Sir Thomas, her mentor, the man whose estate she inherits. (89)

25. Suvendrini Perera, in Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens (1991), challenges the bifurcation of "expansionist" and "domestic" novels and argues that the discourse of imperialism informs even those texts in which the empire is a "peripheral presence."

26. Said, 89.

27. Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality, 8.

28. In Broughton's novel, the heroine, Nelly Le Strange, is forced to give up her "natural," passionate love for Major M'Gregor and enter a loveless marriage in order to secure the family estate. In contrast to the descriptions of pastoral landscape, the domestic interior is encoded as cold, oppressive, and ultimately fatal. Likewise, in Felix Holt, Mrs. Transome's youthful passion for lawyer Jermyn eventually disrupts her carefully controlled domestic economy.

29. Lady Audley arouses desire in the male characters, a desire which is transformed into the detection process.

30. Although Nettie is forced to abdicate domestic rule over her sister's family, Dr. Rider and her sister allow her to retain Little Freddy as a concession to her former sovereignty.

31. Pratt argues that Kingsley employs a language which seeks to "separate mastery from domination, knowledge from control" (215). Pratt offers an appealing description of Kingsley's narrative persona; however, she depicts Kingsley's experience

in Africa in terms which replicate traditional stereotypical tropes: "Africa is her mother, and down those shimmering, dark and slimy pathways, Kingsley is getting herself reborn" (216). This passage posits Africa as the dark and mysterious primal setting of Kingsley's rebirth, and as the feminized landscape.

32. Mills maintains "because of their oppressive socialization and marginal position in relation to imperialism" that women travel writers "tended to concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals, rather than on statements about the race as a whole" (3).

33. The same argument could apply with regard to the class or race of an author. Class, race, and gender are important considerations, however, they do not allow authors to write from a space that is beyond cultural ideology.

34. Terry Lovell, in Consuming Fiction, points out that women were the majority of producers of fiction in the eighteenth-century, but by 1840, when the novel achieved a higher literary status and more pay, women produced twenty per cent of fiction; however, this percentage still indicated that novel writing supported a substantial number of middle-class women (42).

35. Rachel Bowlby argues that the nineteenth-century novel had become a "short-term rather than a durable good" and that this raised questions about the difference between the artist and commercial producer:

> The same developments which were binding commerce and culture together, making commerce into a matter of beautiful images and culture into a matter of trade, a sector of commerce, also, paradoxically, led to the theoretical distinction whereby they were seen . . . as antithetical in nature. (Bowlby, 9)

36. See Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of the development of capital in Accumulation of Capital.

37. The mid-nineteenth-century conception of the single woman as superfluous is wonderfully parodied in a speech by Mr. Copperhead in another of Oliphant's novels, Phoebe Junior:

> I think we could get on with a deal fewer women, I must allow. There's where Providence is in a mistake. We don't want 'em in England; it's a waste of raw material. . . .[W]e can't do without 'em of course, and the surplus we ought to export as we export other surpluses. (Oliphant, 255)

38. Stephen Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: Dracula and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," Victorian Studies (summer 1990) 621-645.

39. Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," and Suvendrin Perera, Reaches of Empire, 82.

CHAPTER TWO
GOLD MINERS AND GOLD-DIGGERS: THE FEMALE SCHEMER AS IMPERIAL ADVENTURER IN LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET

In this chapter I examine how a mid-nineteenth-century "sensation novel," Lady Audley's Secret, by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, processes issues of imperialism.[1] I argue that the "peripheral" plot of the colonial adventurer is not marginal to the text, but functions to create an (anti-)heroine who is a domesticated and feminized imperial adventurer. The domestic novel's appropriation of the figure of the colonial adventurer suggests a need to work through issues of imperialism within the confines of the novel. Braddon's novel plays out nineteenth-century anxieties of excess, which are expressed in representations of bigamy, the "surplus" woman, and (over)production. I situate my analysis of the novel within the context of mid-nineteenth-century social issues, such as female emigration to Australia, English marriage laws and bigamy, and women as producers and consumers of mass culture.

Lady Audley's Secret (1862), one of the most popular of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's serialized best sellers, is ostensibly a novel of detection, romance, and murder. In this "sensation novel," a dilettantish young barrister, Robert Audley, discovers that his ravishing young aunt, Lucy Audley,

has lied about her past and is hiding a former marriage, a child, and the attempted murder of his missing friend, her first husband, George Talboys. George Talboys had met Lady Audley/Helen Maldon when he was a dashing, wealthy dragoon and she was a beautiful inn-keeper's daughter who hoped that a marriage to Talboys would elevate her socially. After they married, however, George Talboys is disinherited by his father and forced to retire from the dragoons. He becomes despondent when he cannot find a job and then decides to desert his wife and child and seek his fortune in the Australian gold mines. His wife, Helen Maldon, when left to create her own fortune, changes her name to Lucy Graham, fakes her own death, deserts her son, relocates, secures a job as a governess, and eventually marries the wealthy Lord Audley. When George Talboys, who is coincidentally a friend of Robert Audley's, returns to England a rich man he discovers his wife's "death." Robert Audley invites his grieving friend to his family estate for the weekend, where he is reunited with Lady Audley/Helen Maldon. When she is confronted with the return of her first husband, George Talboys, Lady Audley pushes him down an old well on the Audley estate and leaves him for dead. The rest of the novel charts Robert Audley's dawning suspicions of his aunt and his accumulation of evidence against Lady Audley (all of which results in her confinement in a Belgian maison de santé).

The term "sensation novel" was a largely pejorative term used to describe the immensely popular, often serialized fiction of the eighteen-sixties. Ann Cvetkovich argues that the "sensation novel" is not really an identifiable genre; the term was used to designate fiction that was considered "aesthetically inferior . . . and morally questionable."[2] However, there are certain distinguishing characteristics of novels characterized as "sensation novels"; they included "violent and thrilling actions, astonishing coincidences, stereotypic heroes, heroines, villains, much sentimentality, and virtue rewarded and vice apparently punished at the end" (Brantlinger 5).[3] Certainly, sensation novels were not the first to depict crime or adultery; however, sensation novels were received as shocking because they revealed a hidden criminality beneath a placid domestic surface:

> [The sensation novel contains] crimes and mysteries [which] occur, not in foreign countries or wild landscapes, not among the lower classes or the inhabitants of monasteries and convents, but in the stately homes of the aristocracy, whose lives are depicted in realistic detail. . . . The sensation novel exploits the disparity between apparently stable families and marriages and the horrifying secrets and extremes of passion that disrupt them. (Cvetkovich 45)

I would expand Cvetkovich's argument--that sensation novels reveal a "wildness" or "foreignness" within the "stately homes of the aristocracy"--and suggest that these novels implicitly describe the violence of colonialism, a violence that is represented as contaminating and destabilizing the country estate. The threat to the family is often represented as a

transgressive woman who violates social conventions, by either committing bigamy, or murder, or deserting her children. Thus, women become the metaphoric agents of colonial violence.

Braddon's novel was received as a shocking portrait of evil, a dangerous and unwholesome portrait of female ambition and an inauguration of a new type of heroine, one "standing alone, carrying out some strong purpose without an ally or confidant, and thus showing herself independent of mankind and superior to those softer passions to which the sex in general succumbs."[4] However, the representation of Lady Audley/Helen Maldon/Lucy Graham as vain, greedy, manipulative, cold-hearted and self-consciously beautiful goes beyond that of a typical anti-heroine; she is also implicated within the novel's rhetoric of imperialism. Lady Audley is a feminization of the male colonial adventurer; she represents the colonizing impulse in female Victorian imagination as well as the limits of female ambition and women's possible engagement with colonization.

Victorian reviews of Braddon's novel condemned both its alleged immorality and its supposed lack of literary worth. Margaret Oliphant's scathing review of sensation novels ("Novels," published in Blackwoods) chastises Braddon for creating "unfeminine" and immoral heroines.[5] The Victorian critic E.S. Dallas also objected to the depiction of what he claimed were unfeminine heroines in sensation novels on the grounds that these heroines are inauthentic: "The life of

women cannot well be described as a life of action. When women are thus put forward to lead the action of a plot, they must be urged into a false position. . . . if the novelist depends for his sensation upon the action of a woman, the chances are that he will attain his end by unnatural means" (Dallas, The Gay Science, 2, 298). Dallas' argument unwittingly suggests that sensation novels created a hitherto nonexistent space for female action and aggression within the domestic realm. The charges against sensation novels often included claims that women novelists were themselves immoral and unfeminine.Thus, contemporary charges against Braddon's novels often implicated Braddon's known bigamous marriage to John Maxwell and her humble experiences supporting herself on the popular stage. Without suggesting that Lady Audley's Secret be read as autobiography (the improbable nature of the plot alone prohibits this!), contemporary Victorian critics' linking of the novel with Braddon's life suggests an anxiety concerning Victorian female sexuality, unfair marriage laws, and women as producers and consumers of commodities. What was viewed as Braddon's hyper-productivity caused even her supporters anxiety over her novels' literary merits:

> Your stories are all admirable, but you have written too many--or rather . . . you have put your name on too many. You might have had three reputations. . . People can't believe your work can all be on the highest level . . .because there is so much of it.[6]

This anxiety of excess is expressed in the novel's own representations of (over)production, bigamy, and the problem

of "surplus women." I argue that this concern over surplus is symptomatic of advanced capitalism's need for new (colonial) markets; sensation novels often transformed these issues of economic surplus into domestic dramas of bigamy and "surplus women."

The popularity of bigamy plots in mid-Victorian novels also reflects a tension surrounding English marriage laws. Between 1853 and 1863 there were 884 cases of bigamy tried in England.[7] In the much publicized Yelverton case of 1861, Captain Yelverton seduced Theresa Longworth, underwent a secret marriage ceremony in Ireland, and tried to coerce her into emigrating to New Zealand, at which point she discovered his previous marriage. Although Theresa Longworth won her Dublin trial, she lost an appeal to the House of Lords. The case was the impetus for many novels and stage productions, including a sensation novel by Theresa Longworth herself, Martyrs to Circumstance (1861), which transforms her legal struggle for recognition of the legitimacy of her commonlaw marriage into a tragic romance of star-crossed lovers. However, the actual events of the case illustrate what became common concerns of mid-nineteenth-century women's fiction: the secret of a hidden wife (or husband), the lack of an effective system of justice, the punishments that follow a (in)voluntary seduction, and the use of the colonies as a convenient deposit for inconvenient women.

The "Exceptional Case" of Miss Morley: Female Colonists as a Devalued Commodity

Lady Audley's Secret alludes to the bleak role of women emigrants with the brief description of Miss Morley, a woman George Talboys meets aboard ship as he returns to England. This minor character represents the numerous Englishwomen who were urged to emigrate to Australia during the mid-nineteenth-century.[8] Her narrative illustrates the loss of value that women incurred after being in the colonial market: she can no longer capitalize on youthful beauty and is now past her child-bearing years.

> He [her fiance] was too poor to marry then; and when I was offered a situation as governess in a rich Australian family I persuaded him to let me accept it, so that I might leave him free to win his way in the world, while I saved a little money . . . I never meant to stay so long [15 years]; but things have gone badly with him in England. That is my story, and you can understand my fears. They need not influence you. Mine is an exceptional case. (15)

Miss Morley exemplifies the redundancy of Englishwomen who were encouraged to help populate the colonies, specifically Australia.[9] In addition to emigration as a solution to the perceived problem of "surplus" women, these women were to be part of a "feminine civilizing mission" in the colonies. It was hoped that the presence of gentlewomen as the repositories of gentility, religious morality, and English domesticity would strengthen a sense of national identity and loyalty in the colonies. Caroline Chisholm, organizer of the Family Colonization Loan Society, aided the emigration of wives and

children whom she termed "God's police." Chisholm argued that Victorian women would turn "bachelors in the bush" into "loyal and happy subjects of the state."[10]

In addition to illuminating the actual living conditions of women who chose to emigrate to Australia, Hammerton's study shows the power of the imaginative connection between emigration and the condition of English single women in the nineteenth-century. Single gentlewomen were discussed in terms of "surplus," "supply," "market." The "solution" of female emigration served to bypass a critique of social conditions at home, and, in some cases, worked to siphon off potential feminist energies (i.e. Mary Taylor [11]). It is also significant that Australia, originally regarded as the dumping ground for convicts and the disreputable lower-class, was proposed as the territory into which "excess" women would be forced to move.

Yet, instead of marrying and permanently establishing a life in the colonies, Miss Morley illustrates the problematic nature of female emigrants who live in the colonies and then return to England. After fifteen years in Australia she is a devalued product, whereas George Talboys becomes a wealthy producer. After just three and a half years in Australia, George Talboys returns to England a rich man, while Miss Morley's fifteen years have given her only "melancholy eyes: eyes that seem to have faded with poring over closely-printed books and difficult needlework" and a "pale and wan" face

(13). Her paltry "savings" are no insurance of her future life back in England:

> The person I go to meet may be changed in his feelings towards me; or he may retain all the old feeling until the moment of seeing me, and then lose it in a breath at sight of my poor faded face. (14)

Miss Morley's capital is her femininity and genteel education, and these do not produce much profit. Australia is thus represented as a poor market for the commodity of femininity, but a good market for the masculine entrepreneur. Miss Morley's anxiety over the diminishing value inherent in femininity is echoed in Lady Audley's constant anxiety about getting old and losing her beauty: "Shall I ever grow old, Phoebe? Will my hair ever drop off as the leaves falling from those trees, and leave me wan and bare like them? What is to become of me when I grow old?" (91). Lady Audley uses her beauty and refinement to procure a position as a governess, but the value of her commodities would have depreciated, like Miss Morley's, if Lady Audley had not employed "unfeminine" entrepreneur machinations in furthering her investment.

Miss Morley's short narrative as a governess who has not benefitted from the colonial project contextualizes Lady Audley's ambition and George Talboys' imperial adventuring. Even though Miss Morley has lived in Australia longer than George Talboys, she is not described as brave, adventurous, or successful. Instead, the narrator suggests that Miss Morley sees George Talboys as

> so brave in his energy and determination, in his proud triumph of success, and in the knowledge of the difficulties he had vanquished, that the pale governess could only look at him in wondering admiration. (19)

This dismal rendering of the female emigrant highlights the unfeasability of imperial adventuring for women, specifically as an avenue for Lady Audley's ambition. Unlike Lady Audley's callous opportunism, Miss Morley is patient and loyally waits to be reunited with her betrothed. Miss Morley's fidelity to her first betrothed does not profit her; she did not market herself aggressively to the highest bidder when she was at the height of her attractiveness. Nevertheless, her comments indicate that she is aware of herself as a unit of exchange although she is powerless in defining her own value or in marketing herself effectively.

Miss Morley's comments quoted above undermine her own accomplishments and bravery as a female emigrant and instead inflate praise of George Talboys as an heroic, successful colonial adventurer. However, this overstated, self-depreciating admiration can be read as ironic, given what we know to be the falsity of George's image of his faithful wife back home. Since the rhetoric of the male imperial adventurer occurs <u>after</u> the description of Lady Audley's new life, the image of the faithful wife is undercut as he speaks it. The discourses of both imperialism (George Talboys' triumph in Australia) and domestic femininity (the image of Helen Talboys passively waiting at home) are linked and subverted through the meek agency of Miss Morley. In voicing her own realistic

doubts about what is waiting for her in England, Miss Morley punctures George Talboys' swaggering sense of purpose:

> 'I swear to you, Miss Morley . . . that, till you spoke to me tonight, I never felt one shadow of fear; and now I have that sick, sinking dread at my heart, . . . Leave me alone . . .'. (20)

Throughout their conversation, George Talboys asks no questions of Miss Morley and ignores any similarities between her colonial experiences and his own. It is his failure of imagination--the inability to conceive of women's lives or ambitions beyond a stereotype of domesticity and beauty--that proves nearly fatal to George Talboys. Significantly, while George's heroic narrative overshadows Miss Morley's personal history, his story is contained and limited to two pages in a four hundred page novel: the rhetoric of male imperial adventure is thus overwhelmed and engulfed by the feminine discourses of domesticity and romance.

In contrast to the helplessness of Miss Morley, Lady Audley is portrayed as aggressive, violent, and motivated by self-interest. Helen Maldon's transformation into Lady Audley subverts the exaggerated rhetoric of the "Angel in the House" that George Talboys uses to characterize his wife. Early in the novel, he imagines his wife as a "keystone," the "one star" which kept him "pure" and "safe," confirming Helen Maldon's ("Lady Audley") initial depiction as a feminine spiritualized symbol of home and England. Yet the text deconstructs the dichotomy of the masculine, colonial-adventurer and feminine, domestic angel by subverting George

Talboys' colonial adventure narrative and destabilizing his image of his faithful wife. In addition, the characters of George Talboys and Lady Audley are linked together by a series of circumstantial similarities; these similarities implicate Lady Audley's method of improving her situation through marriage as imperialistic.

George Talboys: the Imperial Adventurer

The novel is structured around Robert Audley's quest to uncover the true identity of Lady Audley, and his search is initiated by the disappearance of his friend, George Talboys. Robert Audley's investigation of Lady Audley is motivated by his search for George Talboys and the investigation of Lady Audley's past dovetails with the investigation of George Talboys' family background. The narrative links Lady Audley with her first husband, George Talboys: both characters have been disinherited, both "re-fashion" themselves, both mysteriously disappear, and both are strangely compelling to Robert Audley. Furthermore, Robert Audley's exaggerated fascination with Lady Audley can be read as a displacement of his homoerotic attachment to George Talboys; his quest to discover the "truth" behind the facade of her carefully constructed femininity is only satisfied with the recovery of George Talboys' body.

The violence done to George Talboys' body is the central mystery in the novel, yet it is never described; instead, the novel offers passage after passage of elaborate description of Lady Audley. This displacement of Lady Audley for the battered body of George Talboys suggest the ways that the image of the woman was used as a substitute for the violence of colonialism.[12] However, in Braddon's novel this process of displacement works differently; the beautiful woman is not the violated object of colonial violence, she is the perpetrator.

The novel represents Lady Audley as the ultimate spectacle of the male gaze (culminating in the description of her portrait), yet it is George Talboys' body that is the site of much of the novel's violence, and Robert Audley's efforts to detect his aunt's past are dependent upon finding George Talboys' (presumably dead) body. The effects of Lady Audley's criminality--her opportunistic self-fashioning and her "invasion" of the Audley family--are manifested in the body of the male colonial adventurer. The implicit violence of Lady Audley's metaphoric imperialism is <u>actualized</u> or made literal in the physical sufferings of her first husband, both in his physical hardships in Australia and her attempted murder of him. Thus, the novel positions the male imperial adventurer as an innocent victim of a crazy, "uncivilized," feminine violence.

The violence that George Talboys suffers strengthens but finally effaces him in the novel; although he survives the

attempted murder, in the second half of the novel his narrative voice disappears. Although he undergoes a ritualistic rite of passage in Australia, out of which he emerges a self-reliant, financially-independent man, this masculine power of conquest and enterprise is overwhelmed by the feminine, domestic ambition of Lady Audley. Again, George Talboys represents the colonial adventurer who can withstand the physical hardships of a foreign land, but is conquered by a deceptive and ambitious woman.

George Talboys suffers extreme bodily deprivation and hardship in Australia. The "wild" /"natural" lands of Australia are credited with changing Talboys from a "reckless, extravagant, luxurious, champagne-drinking dragoon" to a relentlessly hard-working man "who lay awake under the open sky in the wilds of the new world . . . under a wretched canvas tent . . . half-starved; enfeebled by fever; stiff with rheumatism" (18-19). However, George Talboys' new, more masculine body--"hardened" by the rigors of colonial life-- is later overpowered by Lady Audley. Her feigned death breaks his spirit, and later this slight, incredibly fragile woman is able to over-power him and push him down a well. After his attack by Lady Audley, he climbs from the well with a broken arm and bruised shoulder, hobbles to safety, and then disappears to America. This represents the defeat of the colonial adventurer and implies a weakness or ineffectiveness in the colonial project.

Lady Audley is linked to the two objects in the novel that symbolize George Talboys' colonial venture: the gold nugget and the "bullet." George Talboys strikes it rich and thereby achieves his independence by discovering one huge gold nugget in Australia. The gold nugget is linked to Lady Audley's oft-mentioned golden ringlets, connecting a deceptive femininity with the cumbersome, ultimately spurious wealth of colonialism. The gold that George Talboys acquires from the lawless, uncivilized Australian colony replaces his forfeited inheritance but does not reinstate him in his father's good graces, and, therefore, does not give him back his former social position. The myth of the colonial adventurer as self-made man is subverted; George Talboys' colonial wealth does not give him back his family or social position.

The second symbolic object of colonialism is George Talboys' bullet. George describes a symbolic "wound" he received when his wife "died": "'when some of the fellows were wounded in India, they came home bringing bullets inside them . . . I've had my wound . . . I carry the bullet still" (42). Although George Talboys uses the image of the bullet metaphorically here to represent the emotional damage caused by his wife's "death," his wound soon becomes literal when Lady Audley tries to murder him. The bullet and the gold nugget--both pieces of metal that George Talboys <u>carries</u> with him--are metonymically linked and represent the physical manifestation of (symbolic) colonial wealth. Just as George

endures physical suffering and thereby becomes hardened enough to wrench the gold out of the colonial land, so too Lady Audley--after exhausting the safe, traditional technique of passively waiting for a rich young man to notice her beauty and marry her--uses violence to secure her position as ruler of the Audley estate. However, ultimately both George Talboy's colonial adventuring and Lady Audley's metaphoric colonialism are represented as failures; thus, the novel implicitly criticizes the colonial project.

Robert Audley: The Detection of the Female Criminal and Homoeroticism

Both George Talboys' colonial adventuring and Lady Audley's metaphoric imperialism are represented as violent and as threatening established social structures. However, the crimes of Lady Audley and the mysterious absence of George Talboys serve a positive function in the novel: they energize Robert Audley, the passive heir to the Audley estate. Robert Audley's obsession with recovering the body of George Talboys transforms Robert into an active, productive agent in the search for the "truth" of the narrative. Thus, the intrusion of the colonial adventurers changes Robert Audley from a domesticated, effeminate man, one who appears lackadaisical concerning the manly pursuits of hunting and riding, into a driven detective, an invigorated suitor of Clara Talboys and

a brutal combatant of Lady Audley. Therefore, although the colonial adventurer is described as ultimately powerless, he reinvigorates the guardian of the Audley estate. Robert seems to absorb George Talboys' energy and determination, yet he subverts George's hyper-masculinity into a more concealed, disingenuous energy. For example, in contrast to George Talboys' ingenuous, impulsive persona, Robert is secretive and methodical in collecting and recording clues to George's disappearance in a secret notebook and in forging his detection, link by link.

George Talboys activates Robert's dormant passion: "Here he was, flurried and anxious, bewildering his brain with all manner of conjectures about his missing friend, and, false to every attribute of his being, walking fast" (70). In fact, the relationship between Robert and George is constructed in the text as the central relationship in this "sensation/romance" novel. Robert Audley's extreme attachment to George Talboys is remarked upon by many of the other characters:

> 'You was uncommon fond of this Mr. Talboys, I've heerd say, sir,' . . . 'I've heerd the servants at the court say how you took on when you couldn't find him. I've heard the landlord of the Sun Inn say how cut up you was when you first missed him. 'If the two gents had been brothers,' the landlord said, 'our gent . . . couldn't have been more cut up when he missed the other.'(348)

George Talboys becomes a source of acute anxiety for Robert Audley:

> Was he to be haunted for ever by the ghost of his unburied friend? . . . even here he was pursued by that relentless shadow; even here he was reminded of the

> *secret crime which had darkened his life*. (349 emphasis mine)

Ostensibly, "the secret crime" refers to Robert's suspicions that Lady Audley murdered George Talboys; however, the passage also suggests the unremitting guilt provoked by Robert Audley's erotic feelings for George and a fascination with the male body as the site of colonial violence. Robert Audley displaces his romantic interest in George Talboys onto Lady Audley: at the end of a long chapter in which Robert Audley obsesses about George Talboys' disappearance, he abruptly states, "'Bob, . . . this sort of thing will never do: you are falling in love with your aunt'" (72). As Robert's unacknowledged devotion to George mounts, so do his suspicions of Lady Audley. Robert's investigation of Lady Audley and his concern that he not fall in love with her is an effort to project the guilt of homoeroticism and the association with crime onto the body of a sexualized woman. The novel's latent homoeroticism is later camouflaged when Robert conveniently transfers his affection for George Talboys to George's sister, Clara, who "was so like the friend whom he had loved and lost, that it was impossible for him to think of her as a stranger" (173). Robert Audley and George Talboys' relationship functions to distinguish Robert from the other male characters in the novel, who are motivated by a heterosexual romantic interest. Robert Audley's attachment to George Talboys makes him clear-sighted and analytical, whereas both George Talboys'

and Sir Michael Audley's love for Lady Audley is presented as both deluding and weakening them.

George Talboys represents a different code of masculinity: the trope of the macho ex-Dragoon and fearless imperial adventurer. He fits the stereotype of the physically impressive, rugged, uncivilized colonist: "He had . . . brown eyes, . . a bushy beard and moustache . . . He was tall and powerfully built" (11). He is also associated with the lawlessness and violence of the Australian colonies --the penal colony--which are equated with "riot, drunkenness, and debauchery" (18). However, the hyper-masculinity of George Talboys is implicitly undercut/defused by the character's later state of passivity and absence. George Talboys is either absent throughout much of the novel, or he is being taken care of by Robert Audley. Immediately upon his return, George Talboys --reading that his wife is dead--becomes dissipated and passive, while Robert gains momentum. Robert becomes a tender and solicitous caretaker while George becomes a lifeless object. Perhaps the de-energizing of the character of George Talboys is necessary in order to defuse the homoerotic tension between Robert and a virile and lawless colonial adventurer. However, George Talboys' loss of energy and power also suggest the failure of colonial adventuring as a substitute for the traditional social roles that Robert Audley embodies. George Talboys fails to regain his family or social position through his colonial adventure in the Australian gold

mines; instead, his tragedy teaches Robert Audley to value the stability of his own aristocratic family.

Both George Talboys' colonial adventuring and Lady Audley's metaphoric colonial adventuring are represented as resulting from a inadequacy of traditional avenues of ambition: George Talboys loses his ancestral wealth and his military career while Lady Audley's (conventional) strategy of using her beauty to marry a rich young man proves unsuccessful once George Talboys is disinherited for marrying her. At this point in the narrative, their two tragedies would be salvageable within the framework of conventional romantic narratives: the harsh father would eventually relent and the young lovers, loyal to each other in poverty, would be rewarded. However, in Braddon's novel the heroine lacks any romantic motivation; instead, her marriages are carefully-planned business ventures. Colonial adventuring then, is represented as the result of a failure of the traditional means of success and as an excess of ambition. However, these ambitions are violently disruptive and must be curtailed by the moral agency of the detective, Robert Audley.

The ambition of a single, "superfluous" woman who uses her femininity to improve her social and financial status destabilizes both the Talboys and the Audley families and causes a rift between the old-fashioned patriarchs (Mr. Talboys and Sir Audley) and the heirs apparent (George Talboys and Alicia Audley). Ultimately, however, Robert Audley uses

the discovery and disclosure of Lady Audley's crimes as a means of reconciling George Talboys with his father and Alicia Audley with her father. Therefore, the criminal excess of Lady Audley's ambition--her hyper-femininity and her bigamy--destabilizes the aristocratic family structure, yet, finally solidifies these families in opposition to the threat from the "other."[13]

Lady Audley becomes the scapegoat for Robert's romantic attachment to George Talboys and George's association with lawlessness. Once Robert projects his feelings for George onto Clara, he is safe from the seductive powers of Lady Audley/George. At the close of the novel, Lady Audley has died in a Belgian mental home, Robert has married Clara Talboys, George has returned alive and Clara, Robert, and George are living happily together. The reunion of George and Robert is disguised within a conventional (heterosexual) romantic resolution; thus the guilt of homoeroticism and the criminality suggested by George's Australian adventures are displaced onto the ambitious woman.

Lady Audley: The Female Colonial Adventurer

The substitution of Lady Audley for George Talboys functions as more than a projection of homoerotic desires: Lady Audley also represents the feminization of George Talboys' role as imperial adventurer. Both characters

dissociate themselves from their original families, create new identities, and set out to make their fortunes in a new, lawless territory. However, although there was an historical movement encouraging women to emigrate to Australia, the easy wealth illustrated in George Talboys' gold mining adventure was rarely a realistic goal for women. Instead, Lady Audley acts out a symbolic colonial conquest in which marriage figures as the colonial market place. After conquering the local inhabitants with her contrived girlish charm, she invades the Audley family, appropriates the Audley title and wealth, and uses violence to maintain this rule. The failure of Lady Audley's colonial conquest and her eventual punishment suggests an effort to distinguish the English countryside from the colonial space: while the wealth of a colonial adventure can be brought to England, the methods of colonial adventuring will not be allowed.

In her second (bigamous) marriage lady Audley intrudes the acquisitive, violent male imperial urge into the domestic realm. Lady Audley--a "gold-digger"--is an invader, a usurper into the Audley family and her marriage is described in terms of a calculated campaign.

> 'I determined to run away from the wretched home which my *slavery* supported. I determined to desert the father. . . I determined to go to London, and lose myself in that great chaos of humanity.'I had seen the advertisement in the Times while I was at Wildernsea, and I presented myself to Mrs. Vincent . . . under an assumed name. . . . 'I came here, and [Sir Michael Audley] made me an offer, the acceptance of which would lift me at once into the sphere to which my ambition

> had pointed ever since I was a school-girl, and heard for the first time that I was pretty. (299 emphasis mine)

Lady Audley's use of the word "slavery" suggests what Perera identifies as the language of "orientalist misogyny." [14] When she compares her domestic situation to slavery Lady Audley uses the language of colonialism to highlight the imprisonment of (western) women.

The above description of Lady Audley's self-determined ambition is comparable to George Talboys' decision to leave his family and seek his fortune in Australia:

> . . [my father] wrote me a furious letter, telling me he would never again hold any communication with me, and that my yearly allowance would stop from my wedding day. I ran up to London and tried to get a situation as a clerk . . . [but] I couldn't get anybody to believe in my capacity. . . I flew into a rage with [Helen/Lady Audley], myself, her father, the world. . . and ran out of the house, . . . I was going to try my fortune in the new world. (19)

Both George Talboys' decision to go abroad and Lady Audley's plan to relocate result from the inadequacy of the traditional means of success: George Talboys' father disowns him, he is forced out of the dragoons, and he is unprepared and unskilled in the new market. Similarly, Lady Audley's first husband deserts her, her father fails to support her and, therefore, she must travel to a new, more lucrative marriage market.

Colonialism is thus presented as a failed solution to the problems of a changing market economy. When George leaves for Australia, Lady Audley is left unprovided for and must seek

"unnatural" means of supporting herself. Their marriage is a mesalliance and both George and "Lady Audley" (Helen Maldon) abandon their marriage--George to seek his fortune in the colonies and Helen to capture a rich husband. However, while George's escape to Australia is scripted as heroic, Lady Audley's ambition is encoded as criminal. Even before she attempts the murder of George Talboys, Lady Audley is marked as "unnatural" or evil when she refuses to wait for her husband to return and abandons her son with her n'er-do-well father. The feminine sphere of adventure and conquest lies in the domestic realm of courtship and marriage, and this is the only avenue open to Lady Audley. Upon relocating, Lady Audley changes her name, reproduces herself as a new commodity, and invests in a new market. Lady Audley understands the rules of the marriage market and consistently speaks of herself as a product, a tool and an investment.

Both "colonial adventures" in Braddon's novel involve a loss of self: George Talboys is physically absent throughout most of the text and Lady Audley is "not herself"; she uses a pseudonym and later is charged with being insane. Lady Audley's narrative of deceit and bigamy suggests that women must refashion their identities if they are to participate in symbolic colonization. Yet to read Lady Audley as having given up her "true" identity would be to posit "Helen Maldon" as an authentic self. We only "know" Helen Maldon as a former identity of Lady Audley. George Talboys' idea of his wife's

character is as false a representation as her later pseudonym, Lucy Graham.

The text attempts to naturalize certain qualities of the colonial adventurer. Both George Talboys and Lady Audley are described as having an intrinsic, "natural" charm, which transcends their social identities and allows them to "conquer" people they meet:

> [Lady Audley] was blessed with that magic power of fascination by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile. The boy who opened the five-barred gate, . . . the verger at the church . . . the vicar . . . the porter . . . her employer; his visitors; her pupils; the servants; everybody, high and low [loved her]. (5)

Lady Audley's reign at Audley Court is facilitated by the devotion of each lowly "subject"; she charms all of the inhabitants indiscriminantly. Similarly, when his wealth and status are unknown, it is George Talboys' personality that captivates his fellow travellers aboard the Argus:

> George Talboys was the life and soul of the vessel; nobody knew who or what he was, or where he came from, but everybody liked him. . . . He told funny stories,. . . He was a capital hand at speculation and vingt-et-un, and all the merry games . . . (12)

George and Lady Audley are represented as having a quality--a "charm"--that transcends social position, but that is inexorably linked to their class identities. The narrative's discourse of the "natural" implicitly legitimizes class privilege; even stripped of his inheritance, George Talboys' "natural" charm distinguishes him from the other travellers. However, the representation of Lady Audley's "charm" is

presented more ambiguously and suggests a more complicated attitude toward gender and class privilege. Lady Audley's irresistible femininity is based on a hyper-consciousness of her lack of status: her charm is in her self-conscious role as dependent child. On one hand, Lady Audley's effect on others is described as a result of an organic phenomenon, her beauty; yet Lady Audley's beauty--like her alleged madness--is hereditary and is marked as both genuine and contrived, organic yet constructed.[15]

Femininity is represented as comparative, competitive, and constituted by appearances. The female characters in the novel are developed by a series of reflections and likenesses symbolized by Lady Audley's mirrored dressing room. Lady Audley's power is both constituted and contained by her femininity; the text sets up Lady Audley as the object of the reader's gaze while also representing her as constantly in control of (and constructing) her appearance. For example, the climax of Lady Audley's calculated violence occurs when she sets fire to Castle Inn in an attempt to kill Robert Audley before he can expose her true identity. In this scene, Lady Audley is described as having an abundance of supernatural energy and the "unearthly glitter of her beauty" subdues even the abusive Luke Marks. The language used to describe her as she ignites the room is sexual:

> She . . . smoothed her wet hair before the looking glass, . . . She [placed] the flaming tallow candle very close to the lace furbelows about the glass before she could succeed in throwing any light on the dusky

> mirror; so close that the *starched muslin seemed to draw the flame towards it by some power of attraction to its fragile tissue.* (274 emphasis mine)

The "fragile tissue" of Lady Audley's dress (femininity) commands the phallic flame; yet, the scene is framed by Lady Audley looking in the mirror and arranging her appearance by the aid of the candlelight. Thus, the passage is not so much about Lady Audley's sublimated sexuality as it is about her determination to be the object of (her own) gaze.

Robert Audley decodes his aunt first by analyzing varied descriptions of her, then by examining the unfinished (Pre-Raphaelite) portrait of her, than by contrasting her to his cousin, Alicia Audley, and finally by judging her in opposition to Clara Talboys. Lady Audley is composed of surfaces: her carefully arranged disheveled ringlets, her affected child-like demeanor, the commissioned painting. She calculatedly presents herself as an aesthetic object, and her portrait illustrates the controlled, minutely- detailed artifice of her beauty:

> the painter must have been a Pre-Raphaelite. No one but a Pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair, by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets, with every glimmer of gold and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a Pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid brightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange sinister light to the deep blue eyes. (60)

This passage accuses the painting of an almost indecency in its portrayal of Lady Audley. The characterization of the Pre-Raphaelite painting as detailed, "lurid," "exaggerated," and "sinister" is a commentary on the creation of sensation

novels. The act of viewing the painting (reading novels) is described as solitary, somewhat unwholesome, even masturbatory. In order to see the painting, Robert Audley and George Talboys must crawl through a secret passageway which opens onto a trap door on the floor of Lady Audley's room. When they reach her rooms they are confronted by an "oppressive [atmosphere] from the odors of perfumes in bottles whose stoppers had not been replaced" (59). Symbolically, it is Lady Audley's presence, her sexuality, which has leaked and which she carelessly leaves uncorked. However, the dishevelled disorder is calculated; Lady Audley's room, like her mass of unruly curls, is assembled for effect, and yet it is this apparent disorder that overwhelms and fascinates the male characters in the novel. The sexual nature of the painting is further demonstrated by the furtive and focused manner in which Robert asks that George view the painting:

> 'we have between us only one candle, a very inadequate light with which to look at a painting. Let me, therefore, request that you will suffer us to look at it one at a time: if there is one thing more disagreeable than another, it is to have a person dodging behind one's back and peering over one's shoulder, when one is trying to see what a picture's made of. (60)

Robert takes his turn first, but his reaction is veiled. He "arranged the easel very conveniently, and . . . seated himself on the chair in front of it for the purpose of contemplating the painting at his leisure. He rose as George turned around" (60). In contrast, George Talboys makes no judgments of the painting, but is overwhelmed and almost

paralyzed by his wife's image. The portrait's effect on the two characters suggests the distinct ways that each reacts to Lady Audley's feminine power: Robert Audley is fascinated but controlled while George Talboys is obliterated by the spectacle of Lady Audley.

The characterization of Lady Audley as both wickedly enchanting and powerfully independent suggests the complexity of women's positions within the imperial project and within the domestic space. On one hand, women are often identified with the colonial space as passive territory to be conquered by the white male colonizer. However, Lady Audley is both an aesthetic (eroticized) object of the male gaze (as shown in the passage discussed above) and the creator and marketer of herself as a product. Nevertheless, Lady Audley's power and autonomy are compromised by her position as a wife; her access to money and her social status are dependent on Lord Audley. The "female adventurer," while symbolically participating in colonialism, has a much more limited power, and it must be remembered that her "imperial adventure" is metaphoric. Lady Audley's relationship to money, title, and crime can be examined within the context of what imperialism makes legitimate: re-forging one's identity, the abandonment of families, the ruthless appropriation of wealth, and the use of violence.

George Talboys' decision to abandon his wife and son and explore the gold mines of Australia is the action that

instigates a whole series of crimes in the novel. The novel implies that George Talboys is not morally responsible for abandoning his family because he eventually returns home wealthy and eager to resume his marriage. Morality in the novel consists of a series of renunciations, disowning and blame-shifting that finally ends with Lady Audley as the only culprit. Even the lower-class, violent Luke Marks--who blackmails Lady Audley and controls his wife by threats of violence--receives absolution on his deathbed when he confesses to Robert that George Talboys is still alive. The excess of crime in the novel--Luke Mark's violence, Phoebe's blackmail, and even Robert Audley's deceptions--is all projected onto Lady Audley. Lady Audley's lawlessness justifies male efforts to "civilize" or contain her. She functions as a double signifier: she enacts the violence of colonizers and also represents the irrational/savage colonial who must be subdued.

Although physically dissimilar, Lady Audley is in many ways a rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason.[16] However, Braddon's text transforms the mad (creole) woman in the attic into an ultra-white, calculating villain whose questionable madness allows her to escape punishment. While Bertha Mason sets the fire at Thornfield in a fit of jealous/crazy rage and thereby kills herself, Lady Audley methodically plots to kill Robert Audley in order to protect and maintain her new life (money, status). She arrives at the

inn where Robert Audley is staying, finds out which room is his, bolts his door from the outside, sets fire to the building, and then walks home.

Lady Audley is remarkable as a Victorian heroine because of her combination of conventional feminine beauty and masculine violence; the terror and fascination of her character lies in this disturbing juxtaposition of femininity and masculine aggression. The novel depicts Lady Audley's ambition as methodical and rational while simultaneously portraying it as a product of genetic (maternal) "madness."

This incoherence of female ambition as both methodical/rational and insane/out of control lies at the core of the problematic nature of Lady Audley as villain. More importantly, the novel only tentatively offers Lady Audley's alleged madness as an explanation for her unfeminine violence; much of the novel describes a carefully-planned series of deceptions that enables Lady Audley to achieve a traditional goal of exchanging female beauty for wealth and a new class identity. Lady Audley's unique power, the novel implies, lies not in her calculating femininity but in her lack of sexual/romantic feelings. Every other character in the novel is motivated, to some extent, by romantic interest while Lady Audley operates purely from a "rational," economic self-interest: "'The common temptations that assail and shipwreck some women had no terror for me. . . . The mad folly that the world calls love had never any part in my madness'" (300).

Lady Audley's lack of (hetero)sexuality has been interpreted as both a sublimated eroticism which is expressed through violence, or as repressed homoeroticism (as shown in the scenes between Lady Audley and Phoebe Marks).[17]

Lady Audley's violence--pushing George Talboys down the well and setting fire to the Castle Inn--is not motivated by passion, thwarted romantic love, or maternal devotion. In this way Lady Audley represents a departure from female characters who have sinned but still possess "feminine" emotions, like the heroine of East Lynne, whose most passionate feelings are for her children.[18] Lady Audley's violence is a response to threats to her social position, her domestic power, and her sovereignty. Lady Audley's acts of violence are covert and her aggression is not open, which suggests the illegitimacy of her social position, but which also highlights the problematic nature of women's authority within the family. Therefore, Lady Audley's violence calls into question the violence of the imperialist project while it also suggests the limits of female dominion within the family.

However, the text's attitude toward Lady Audley's metaphoric imperialism is ambiguous; while she threatens the stability of the Audley family, Lady Audley also functions to consolidate it. Her criminality transforms Robert Audley into the family protector; Alicia and Sir Michael Audley are reconciled; and, more importantly, the Audley estate becomes

valuable as a contested site for the power over the Audley line.

However, while the Audley family is rescued from the threat of Lady Audley, there exists a prevailing tone of nostalgia and loss. After Lady Audley has been revealed as an imposter and expurgated, Lord Audley leaves for an extended tour of the continent. At the end of the novel, Audley manor is deserted: "Audley court is shut up, and a grim old housekeeper reigns paramount in the mansion" (376). Even though Lady Audley has been defeated, the briefly described conventional romantic resolution at the novel's end does not dispel the sense of loss.

Landscape and Ideology in Lady Audley's Secret

The integrity and health of the Audley family is represented in terms of the estate, Audley Court. Lady Audley's secret is concealed within the tranquil gardens of Audley Court; thus, the novel subverts the usual formula of Victorian crime novels, which place violence within an urban setting. The novel opens with a detailed description of Audley Court, which evokes a nostalgia for the pastoral. Yet this image of the peaceful rural estate is subverted by a series of violent acts: the attempted murder of George Talboys, Lucas Marks' threats to Phoebe, and the fire at the inn. The use of the countryside as the site of violence likens it to the

lawless territory of the colonial frontier, which suggests that the colonial project somehow contaminates or implicates British national domestic life. Braddon's novel shows how the social instability, lawlessness, and violence of colonialism attacks the security of the country estate; even more importantly, the violence does not come from outside of the estate, but within it. In marrying an imposter, Lord Audley has contaminated the estate and caused its eventual ruin.

Audley Court contains many elements of the picturesque landscape:

> A smooth lawn lay before you, . . . and an orchard surrounded by an ancient wall . . . overgrown with trailing ivy . . . the place had been a convent . . . The house . . . was very old, and irregular and rambling. The windows were uneven; some small, some large; some with heavy stone mullions and rich stained glass; others with frail lattices that rattled in the breeze; others so modern that they might have been added only yesterday. Tall chimneys rose here and there behind the pointed gables, broken down . . . (2)

> A noble place . . . a house in which you incontinently lost yourself . . . a house that could never have been planned by any mortal architect, but must have been the handiwork of . . . Time, who -- adding one room a year. .. a chimney coeval with the Plantagenets, . . .the Tudors . . . a Saxon wall . . .Norman arch . . . Queen Anne,. . . George the Third . . . (2 emphases mine)

In the above passages Audley Court is described as containing and encompassing different styles /periods of English history--old to "modern"--from the "Plantagenets" to the architectural style of George the Third. Thus, the Audley family <u>possesses</u> or is linked with the continuance of English history, and they represent a kind of permanence and continuity. In keeping with

the rhetoric of the picturesque, the developing or designing of the landscape is agentless; it is "the handiwork of . . . Time" and thus encoded as natural. The language of the landscape implicitly links the "noble" with the irregularity and decay of the picturesque. However, this idyllic representation is troubled by hints of secrecy and stagnation:

> The hall door was squeezed into a corner of a turret . . . as if it was in hiding from dangerous visitors, and wished to keep itself a secret--a noble door for all that--old oak, studded with great square-headed iron nails, and so thick that the iron knocker struck upon it with a muffled sound. . . (2)

The description of the door suggests that the nobility of the Audleys is thick and impenetrable, massive, yet somehow afraid of invasion. The door symbolizes Lord Audley-- "noble," "old," "square -headed," and "thick." The feared invasion that the opening description hints at is the marriage of Lord Audley to Lucy Graham/Helen Maldon. Lady Audley--a self-fashioned adventurer--uses her consciously-constructed femininity to breech the impregnable Audley family.

However, the text implies that Lady Audley's success in penetrating the Audley estate results from a weakness in the Audley family (i.e. from the values inherent in the country estate): a lack of productivity.

> [Audley Court was] a place that strangers fell into raptures with; feeling a yearning with to have done with life . . . a spot in which Peace seemed to have taken up her abode . . . [It contained] the *stagnant* well . . . with an *idle* handle that was never turned, and a *lazy* rope so rotten that the bucket had broken away from it, and had fallen into the water. (2 emphases mine)

The decay described in the above passage is caused by disuse; in fact, violence is foreshadowed by the rotten rope which is attributed to the inertia of the estate, symbolized by Robert Audley's lack of ambition, productivity, or sexual desire. The responsibility for the novel's later violence and the eventual abandonment of the estate is attributed not to Lady Audley, but to the estate itself, and the ideology of the country estate. The "peaceful" appearance of the rural landscape represents the myth of English history as unchanging/static. However, the passages above deconstruct the image of the pastoral, showing it to be stagnant and yet pregnant with violence.

The function of Lady Audley in the novel is ambiguous: she is the agent of violence, the usurper/invader of the Audley family. All moral blame falls on her--an abandoned wife, questionably "mad," motherless--yet her death is a false resolution. The tone of the novel belies its conventional resolution, so that we are left with a nostalgic mourning for the country estate and a desire to contain the disruptive violence of the colonial enterprise.

Braddon's novel illustrates the close imbrication of colonialism and the British domestic space. The colonial adventure--in both its masculine and its feminized (metaphoric) form--is depicted as a dangerous, even criminal strategy. Braddon's novel shows the feminine ambitions of Lady Audley to be imperialistic; thus, the domestic space is shown

not as an isolated haven, but as a contested site of power. This linking of the feminine/domestic with the violence of colonialism does not justify or make moral the colonial project; rather, my reading of the novel suggests an anxiety that the violence of colonialism would invade the bastion of British stability, the English county estate.

Notes

1. Suvendrini Perera notes the attention paid to Victorian "adventure" narratives, which contain direct references to the colonies or the exotic other, but she challenges the bifurcation of "expansionist" and "domestic" novels and argues that the discourse of imperialism informs even those texts in which the empire is a "peripheral presence."

2. In Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture and Victorian Sensationalism, Cvetkovich argues that the term "sensation" refers to the novels' affective powers, their "capacity to shock, excite, [and] move audiences" (14).

3. Also see Winnifred Hughes discussion of the "sensation novel" in The Maniac in the Cellar.

4. The New Review, December 1863.

5. Blackwood's Magazine 102 (623) 257-280. Reprinted in Robert Wolff's Sensational Victorian Op Cit.

6. Lucy Clifford to Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Chilworth Street, July 25 (1911), Wolff Collection, from Robert Lee Wolff, Sensational Victorian: the Life and Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon. New York: Garland, 1979.

7. See Jeanne Fahnestock, "Bigamy: The Rise and Fall of a Convention," Nineteenth-Century Fiction 36 (1), 58.

8. James Hammerton, Emigrant Gentlewomen, London: Croom Helm, 1979.

9. In 1889 the Australian government commissioned a novelist, Mrs. Penden Cudlip, to write novels which would encourage middle-class English women to emigrate to Australia. An

announcement of this upcoming book appears in the Thomas Cook Company magazine, The Excursionist, December 16, 1889.

10. Hammerton, Ibid, 101.

11. See James Hammerton's description of Mary Taylor in Emigrant Gentlewomen. Mary Taylor, a close friend of the Brontës', emigrated to Wellington, New Zealand in 1845. Her emigration, according to Hammerton, was fuelled by a desire for a more independent, unconventional life that which was available to middle-class, educated women in England. Once in New Zealand, Mary Taylor enjoyed relative financial success with cattle dealing, and later with a clothing shop.

12. See my introduction for a discussion of how the violence of the 1857 Sepoy rebellion was represented using the images of violated British women, in part, as an effort to obscure the image of dead or wounded British men.

13. Lady Audley is not represented as the racial other (as Bertha Mason figures in Jane Eyre); her otherness is her extreme femininity and her class identity.

14. Perera, Op.Cit.

15. The text suggests that Lady Audley's madness is at once hereditary and a convenient excuse for her crimes.

16. Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre New York: Bantam, first published 1847.

17. Natalie Schroeder, "Feminine Sensationalism, Eroticism, and Self-Assertion: M.E. Braddon and Ouida" Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 7 (1) 87-103.

18. Mrs. Henry Wood, East Lynne, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1861

CHAPTER THREE
THE DISEMPOWERING OF THE FEMALE COLONIST: MARGARET OLIPHANT'S THE DOCTOR'S FAMILY

> Self-devotion! Stuff! I am only doing what must be done. . . . I am a colonial girl--I don't know what people do in England. Where I was brought up we were used to be busy about whatever lay nearest to our hand. . . . It is only idle people who have time to think of falling in love and such nonsense. When one is very busy it never comes into one's head. (Oliphant, The Doctor's Family, 97)

In the passage quoted above from Margaret Oliphant's story "The Doctor's Family" (1863), the heroine, Nettie Underwood, declares her difference through a construction of a colonial identity. Nettie insists on a different code of femininity--one that she identifies as "colonial" and one that privileges a particular discourse of duty. Nettie's colonial code of femininity privileges a domestic productivity and materiality over an abstract and idealized concept of romantic love. The tension in the novel is between Nettie's insistence on concerning herself only with practical, household matters and the text's need to produce a romantic heroine.

The novel opens after the main character, Edward Rider's brother, Fred, has arrived penniless from Australia. Edward takes in his profligate brother but bitterly resents his unwelcome presence. Shortly afterwards, Fred's deserted Australian wife, Susan, and their children appear under the management of Susan's younger sister, Nettie Underwood. The plot of the novel revolves around the romance between Nettie and her brother-in-law, a romance which is thwarted by her determined devotion to her sister's family. The dramatic tension in the novel is between Nettie's refusal to prioritize romance or marriage over the demands of her extended family and Dr. Rider's reluctance to accept this same burden. Dr. Rider cannot reconcile his duty to his professional career with responsibility toward family. In Oliphant's earlier story, "The Executor," Dr. Rider was unwilling to accept the burden of a wife's family; however, this story charts his growing regret as he realizes the value of a feminized domestic space, a value which, according to the novel, exceeds the costs of maintaining dependents. The catalyst of Dr. Rider's changed attitude toward marriage is Nettie; her unshakable belief in the necessity of supporting her dependents alternately awes and enrages him. Ultimately, Nettie is ousted from her position as head of family and is

thereby able to marry Dr. Rider relatively unencumbered. Yet this conventional romantic resolution fails to contain the destabilizing portrait of feminine power that Nettie's character represents: her financial independence and her sovereignty over her extended family.

However, Nettie's autonomy is finally overcome by the conventions of the romantic plot. The story can be read as containing conflicting discourses of the "materialist-domestic" and the "romantic/literary."[1] Mary Ann Leiby's thesis exposes the tensions within the representation of Nettie as domestic heroine: the "domestic-material and heroic-dramatic discourse displace the romantic-fairy-tale discourse . . . and thus deconstruct the myth of the Angel in the House"; however, this analysis does not place the domestic discourses within the context of nineteenth-century colonialism. I argue that the crisis of domestic authority portrayed in Oliphant's text represents mid-nineteenth-century anxieties concerning British colonial authority.[2] Nettie's eventual marriage to Dr. Rider, instead of being the achievement of a conventional romantic resolution, verges on the tragic because of the pathos when Nettie is stripped of her former domestic authority, or "duty."

The "discourse of duty" in Oliphant's story is confined to the emotional economy of the household and differs from the middle-class duty espoused in George Eliot's fiction, which is a moral responsibility to a "wider social commitment" (Cottom 186).[3] However, the type of duty illustrated in Oliphant's story--the heroine's loyalty to her family, her absence of personal desire, and her self-sacrifice in the management of the household--corresponds more to the Victorian myth of the "Angel-in-the-House."[4] However, as I discuss above, the text partially deconstructs the discourse of the Angel in the House by showing Nettie as both ethereal/"elf-like" and material/practical.

Oliphant's story ultimately undermines Nettie's discourse of duty by suggesting that her domestic management is an assertion of her own will:

> But Nettie obstinately refused to be said to do her duty. She was doing her own will with an imperious distinctness and energy--having her own way--displaying no special virtue, but a determined willfulness. (104)

Supporting and running a household becomes a means of control, assertion, and even pleasure, for the "superfluous" single woman, instead of the unnatural burden it is assumed to be by the other female characters in the text.[5] Yet, although the story upholds Nettie's domestic abilities, her authority is

shown to be tenuous and the story implies that the only secure domestic authority must be procured by marriage. Thus, the portrayal of Nettie Underwood both subverts and recuperates the trope of the "superfluous" single woman.

The struggle for domestic authority can also be read as representing issues of colonialism: the Australian family is described as "invading" Dr. Rider's house, and Nettie's rule over her sister's family uses the language of the "white man's burden." Thus, the novel's celebration of domestic government is implicated within the text's implicit ideology of imperialism. Nettie is the "colonial girl," the dark other in the text, but she is also the colonizer: she commandeers her sister's family and maintains absolute rule until she is violently overthrown.[6] The essential incoherence in Oliphant's novel is the contradictory way that the figure of the "extra" woman is used to represent both the colonizer and the colonized, an ambiguity that signals the larger tension concerning the role of women in the imperial project. Nettie's eventual "abdication" of her domestic authority and the realization that her "sovereignty" is unfounded symbolize a crisis in colonial authority.

Although she moves into the closed fictional community of Carlingford, Nettie refuses to conform to the standard codes

of English femininity: she is independent, financially self-sufficient, and uninterested in being the object of romantic designs. Nettie uses a discourse of duty, which includes self-sacrifice, and familial obligation to achieve a metaphoric colonization of the Rider family. Her control is justified by her competence and an implicit moral superiority.

As recent post-colonial critics have addressed in their discussions of the latent imperialism in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, the emancipatory representation of a single, (white, middle-class, European) woman's struggle for independence cannot be separated from its seemingly peripheral colonial context.[7] For example, in his analysis of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Edward Said argues that the domestic novel is supported by and implicated within the imperialist project:

> Austen . . . synchronizes domestic with international authority, making it plain that the values associated with such higher things as ordination, law, and propriety must be grounded firmly in actual rule over and possession of territory. . . . What ensures the domestic tranquility and attractive harmony of [the estate] is the productivity and regulated discipline of [the slave plantation]. [8]

Said's arguments destabilize the boundaries between the domestic and the imperial, between a narrative of courtship and Britain's colonial expansion. The structure of patriarchal authority and wealth--embodied in Sir Thomas Bertram--which

supports Mansfield Park derives from a system of colonialism and slavery that is not articulated in the novel. Said's most useful point however, is his analysis of Fanny Price as an "imported commodity" who is paid for by Sir Thomas's colonial wealth and who supplies a missing morality for the Bertram family:

> [Thomas Bertram] understands . . . what has been missing in the education of his children, and he understands it in the terms paradoxically provided for him by . . . the wealth of Antigua and the imported example of Fanny Price . . . What was wanted within was in fact supplied by the wealth derived from a West Indian plantation and a poor provincial relative, both bought to Mansfield Park and set to work. [9]

Although Said's marginalization of feminist criticism keeps him from exploring the implications of the surplus woman as a site for the intersection of the discourses of imperialism and the domestic, his insistence on viewing these canonical works of British literature within the context of nineteenth-century colonialism is important.[10]

As I have discussed in the preceding chapter on Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novel Lady Audley's Secret, the colonial space is often represented off-stage and is seemingly peripheral to the main action of the domestic novel. I argue, however, that issues of colonialism and imperialism are acted out covertly within the domestic sphere,particularly in each novel's representations of the "superfluous" single woman and

her struggle for "sovereignty" over her extended family. Both Braddon's Lady Audley and Oliphant's Nettie invade and appropriate families by using an exaggerated femininity: Lady Audley is a caricature of frail beauty, and Nettie is astoundingly competent at domestic management and self-sacrifice. However, while Braddon's heroine, Lady Audley, is linked through a series of identifications to the colonial adventurer, George Talboys, the heroine in Margaret Oliphant's story, "The Doctor's Family," Nettie Underwood, herself Australian, is "imported" into a small, proto-typical English community.

What does this importation imply about the text's representation of colonialism? Colonialists in this novel are a heterogeneous group: Fred Rider, the doctor's older brother, who is able succeed in neither England nor Australia and eventually drowns after a night drinking; Fred's wife, Susan, an incompetent mother, lacking in propriety and morality--she is only too happy to return to Australia; Richard Chatham, a massive, animal-like Australian; and Susan's younger sister, Nettie, the "colonial girl" who takes on the responsibility for her sister's household. If there are qualities that distinguish the Australian characters from the English ones in the novel they are unconventionality and transience: the very

opposite of the values championed in Oliphant's Chronicles of Carlingford series. Fred, Susan, and Richard Chatham never become members of the Carlingford community; Nettie becomes ensconced in the community only after her ties to her family are broken.[11]

The language of colonial conquest is used to depict power struggles within the Rider family. The arrival of Dr. Rider's brother's family in Carlingford is described as an "invasion" (74); Nettie rules over a family of "savages" (85); and when she separates from them she is characterized as an "abdicat[ing] emperor" (192). Nettie uses the rhetoric of the "white man's burden" to explain to Miss Wodehouse why she must stay with her sister's family:

> "They can't do much for each other--there is actually nobody but me to take care of them all. You may say it is not natural, or it is not right, or anything you please, but what else can one do? That is the practical question," said Nettie, triumphantly. (98)

Nettie defends her seizure of power, the imposition of her will and sovereignty, by arguing that her sister's family is incapable of maintaining their own domestic economy. The rhetoric of feminine domestic efficiency and familial duty thus implicitly upholds the relationship of the colonizer and colonized. As the colonizer, Nettie controls every aspect of the Riders' daily lives by imposing a strict code of domestic

behavior. Her authority is greater than just financial power; her family is described as unable to manage their lives without her. Their attitude toward Nettie alternates between surly resentment and utter dependency. For example, when Little Freddy becomes ill, both of his parents are shown as comically useless and incapable of assisting Dr. Rider:

> Fred, shivering and helpless, stood by the fire, uttering confused directions and rubbing miserably his own flabby hands; his wife, crying, scolding, and incapable, stood at the end of the table, offering no assistance, but wondering when ever Nettie would come back. (111)

Nettie's family is described consistantly as comically incompetent and appallingly ungrateful. However, their main function in the novel is to serve as a foil for Nettie's resourcefulness, household thrift, and self-sacrifice.

Nettie Underwood: the Woman as Colonial and Colonizer

Dr. Rider is initially fascinated by Nettie because she is physically unlike the English women of Carlingford. Nettie represents a different code of femininity, one that is explicitly linked to her identity as a "colonial girl." Her appearance and manner are contrasted to Dr. Rider's former love interest, Bessie Christian, a woman of "saxon . . . beauty" and "composure" (101). In contrast, Nettie's

"prettiness was peculiar . . . she was not only slender, but thin, dark, eager, impetuous, with blazing black eyes and red lips, . . . [Dr. Rider was] not altogether attracted--scarcely sure he was not repelled--unable to withdraw his eyes" (75). Although the descriptions of Nettie do not suggest that she is in any way nonwhite, Dr. Rider's reaction to her marks her as somehow outside of British femininity. Nettie's appearance is a compelling spectacle and marks her as other. "Thin" and "dark" signify a racial otherness; "eager" and "impetuous" suggest an energetic childishness; and "red lips" and "blazing black eyes" mark an eroticization of ethnicity.

Nettie's physical otherness signals her socially anomalous position: although she is an unmarried woman, she is the head of her sister's family, a role that she is granted based on her financial, domestic, and moral authority. While Braddon's Lady Audley uses her hyper-femininity to invade and appropriate the Audley family and estate, Nettie's domestic efficiency--and her sister's abdication of authority--justify her seizing authority over the family. Nettie's assertion of will and her position of power within her sister's family mark her as non-English within the closed world of Carlingford.

Dr. Rider describes Nettie as a little fairy queen, tiny as Titania, but dark as an elf of the east, . . . [with] tiny

hands, brown . . .She . . . had dragged her plaintive sister over the seas -- she it was that had forced her way into Edward Rider's house; taken her position in it, ousted the doctor; and . . . who swept the husband and wife out of it again. (82)

This portrayal combines standard orientalist tropes of the "little fairy queen," and the "elf of the east," with descriptions of aggressive, energetic action: "dragged," "forced," "taken," and "swept." Thus the text counters the image of Nettie as the orientalized object of Dr. Rider's gaze by describing her as the active agent within the household. However, the text suggest that this domestic power is an unenviable authority that comes from others' incompetence; she takes over the domestic tasks her sister is unable or unwilling to perform and assumes the masculine authority as head of household by default:

> Everybody seemed to recognize Nettie as supreme. . . . [Dr.Rider] drew near the table at which Nettie, without hesitation, took the presiding place. . . . Nettie cut up the meat for those staring imps of children . . . kept them silent and in order. She regulated what Susan was to have, and which things were best for Fred. . . .Nettie put out her tiny hand as she spoke to arrest the bottle. Fred stared at her with a dull flush on his face; but he gave in, in the most inexplicable way; it seemed a matter of course to yield to Nettie. . . . [S]he managed them all . . . (89)

In the passage above Nettie governs the domestic space, regulating what her "subjects" consume and monitoring their vices. Nettie's managerial role is based on domestic efficiency, yet it only barely conceals a moral authority. Nettie's family is represented not only as lazy and inept, but as incapable of proper feelings. When Fred Rider dies, not only does Nettie manage the removal of the body, but she is the only one who grieves properly:

> Her heart alone was heavy with regret over the ruined man--. . . she only, to whom his death was no loss, but even, if she could have permitted that cruel thought to intervene, a gain and relief, recognized with a pang of compassion almost as sharp as grief, that grievous, miserable fate. (144)

By contrast, "neither the wife nor children were capable of deep or permanent feeling" (145). Thus, Nettie's seizure of domestic sovereignty is represented as moral.

The morality of the "superfluous" woman does not rest only on this propriety of feeling; Nettie is an agent of activity and domestic production in contrast to the inactive members of her sister's family. Thus, Nettie's colonization of her sister's family is justified by her ability to transform a stagnant (domestic) economy into a productive, profitable enterprise. The text, itself a product of a hyper-productive feminine literary machine, privileges a self-effacing domestic energy.[12] The novel implies that the Australian colonies are

a liberatory space where female independence exists and where hard work and practical concerns replace the discourse of romance. The portrayal of Nettie as exaggeratedly industrious implicitly criticizes the English for being too "soft" and unproductive. However, once imported, these commodities are recuperated into a domestic, national economy. Ultimately, Nettie's authority--cloaked in the language of self-sacrifice and pragmatism--is undone by the greater sovereignty of matrimony.

The climax of the plot occurs when Susan, now a widow, announces her decision to marry Richard Chatham, forcing Nettie to give up her domination of her sister's family. Instead of feeling relief that she is now free to marry Dr. Rider, Nettie is angry and humiliated at this loss of her authority:

> The work she had meant to do was over. Nettie's occupation was gone. With the next act of domestic drama she had nothing to do. For the first time in her life utterly vanquished, with silent promptitude she abdicated on the instant. She seemed unable to strike the blow for the leadership thus snatched from her hands. . . . Never abdicated emperor laid aside his robes with more ominous significance, than Nettie, . . . smoothed down round her shapely wrists those turned-up sleeves. (191-192)

Nettie's role as head of the household is depicted using the language of political power; she is described as the ruler of the domestic empire who is forced to "abdicate" in the wake of

a stronger (male) ruler: Mr. Chatham. This language of political domination, while obliquely signifying a link between the domestic and the imperial, also functions to belittle Nettie's power; she is later referred to as "the little abdicated monarch" and even the passage quoted above ends with a description of her "shapely wrists." Nettie's adamant uninterest in her erotic power, or in the value of herself as a commodity, is constantly undercut by the expectations guaranteed by a domestic novel. The novel at once valorizes Nettie's domestic reign and ridicules her self-importance.

Edward Rider: The Willing Colonized

The arrival of Dr. Rider's extended family is referred to as an "invasion" and an "occupation" of his home (79). Dr. Edward Rider's home is the locus of the invasion, and his mixed reaction reflects the ambiguous nature of the novel's representation of colonialism. Ultimately, the invasion forces Dr. Rider into accepting the burden of familial responsibility through marriage. This intrusion of Australians into the insulated English community of Carlingford signifies what

Stephen Arata has termed "the anxiety of reverse colonization":

> the fear that what has been represented as the "civilized" world is on the point of being colonized by "primitive" forces. . . . In the marauding, invasive Other, British culture sees its own imperial practices mirrored back . . . (Arata 623)

Although Arata's essay is concerned with the gothic genre and focuses on Bram Stoker's Dracula, his argument that the presence of a powerful, energetic non-English character performs a "colonization of the body" which in some sense revitalizes his English victims can be applied to the representations of the "other" or colonized in earlier British domestic fiction. Dracula "invades" England and "colonizes" through polluting English blood, while in Oliphant's text the Australians invade by appearing as part of an English family. Arata points out that Dracula appropriates Western culture by learning English customs and disguising himself as an Englishman. Similarly, Nettie appropriates through exaggeration the feminine English qualities of thrift and self-sacrifice and revitalizes Dr. Rider.

Since the Australian colonies were composed of British emigrants, they do not provoke the same racial fears as other British colonies (such as India or Africa). Australia was conceived as a vast frontier, an empty space into which excess

British energies (and women) could be directed.[13] The reverse "invasion" of Australians into Carlingford in Oliphant's novel occurs in layers: first when Fred Rider returns from Australia and second, when his deserted family joins him.

The fictional community of Carlingford, which appears in a series of Oliphant's novels, is a closed, insulated world, a prototypical English village of strict class hierarchies. Edward Rider's house serves as a microcosm of this village: it is described as cramped, drab, and located in a second-rate neighborhood where his professional ambitions are limited by the superior practice of Dr. Marjoribanks and the superstitions of his own patients.

While the occupation of Dr. Rider's house by his brother provokes impatience and anger, Nettie's residence is described in increasingly positive terms. The difference in these colonial portrayals reflects the novel's ambiguous representation of colonialism and codes of femininity. The novel champions the virtues of Nettie's domestic skills not just by showing the helplessness of Fred and Susan Rider, but also by illustrating Edward Rider's misery in his bachelorhood:

> There is *no fresh air nor current of life* in this stifling place (68) He was never so bored and sick of a night by himself. He tried to read, but reading did not occupy his mind. He grew furious over his charred chops

> and sodden potatoes. (81) . . . the dullness of that house, into which foot of woman never entered. . . . The chill loneliness of that trim room, with its drawn curtains and tidy pretence of being comfortable, exasperated him beyond bearing. (83)

By showing Edward Rider's bachelor life as bleak and unsatisfying the novel valorizes Nettie's ability to create and maintain a feminized domestic space. The stifling, claustrophobic atmosphere of Dr. Rider's un-feminized rooms suggests that the imported "colonial" energies of Nettie are necessary to revitalize and re-masculinize the stagnant, closed community of Carlingford.

The novel ends with an ambiguously subdued domestic scene:

> But when the doctor brought Nettie home, and set her in that easy-chair which her image had possessed so long, he saw few drawbacks . . . *Nettie diffused h e r s e l f* till the familiar happiness became so much a part of his belongings that the doctor learned to grumble once more . . . the little wayward heroine who, . . . loved her own way still in the new house . . . had it as often as was good for her. (205 emphasis mine)

Nettie's character reflects an ambiguous fascination with the imagined freedom of colonial women in Australia and the pressure to contain this female energy within the established discourse of English domesticity.

Nettie's sense of domestic duty compels Dr. Rider finally to accept his patriarchal role as head of a family. What motivates Edward's desire to take on the responsibility for

his extended family is the conviction that Nettie's role is unnatural. Nettie, however, violently resists abnegating her position. In the resulting power struggle, Edward undermines Nettie's power through secret solicitations on her behalf and by stubbornly wooing her. Edward's first move to subvert the balance of power is to subsidize Nettie's rent secretly, symbolically initiating a "hostile take-over" which serves to undermine the locus of her power--the home. The moment of the overt shift in power occurs when Fred Rider is discovered dead and Edward asserts his latent masculine authority and assumes control over his surviving family:

> Edward Rider was superintending all the arrangements of the time for Nettie's sake. Not because it was his brother who lay there, . . . nor because natural duty pointed him out as the natural guardian of the orphaned family. . . . *it was the consciousness of doing Nettie's work for her, taking her place*, sparing that creature . . . Not for Fred's sake, but for Nettie's, he held his place in the troubled cottage, and assumed the position of head of the family. (145-6 emphasis mine)

Edward's motivation, disguised under the rhetoric of solicitude, is to supplant Nettie's position as ruler of the family. His urge to power is explained not as a result of familial feeling, but as a response to the perceived unnaturalness of Nettie's authority. "Sparing" Nettie is a convenient euphemism for limiting her authority to the role of a wife. The death of Fred Rider, an empty figure-head of male

authority, opens up the space for Edward as the legitimate male authority.

Nettie's authority in the family is taken over by a combination of two male authorities: the English authority of Edward Rider and the hyper-masculinity of Richard Chatham, the Australian "Bushranger" who marries the widowed Susan. Interestingly, it takes two male characters to take over Nettie's responsibilities as head of the household, perhaps symbolizing the weakness of male characters in the novel and also implying the need to merge the English (national, provincial) moral authority (Dr. Rider) with the "uncivilized," hyper-masculinity of the colonial (Mr. Chatham). Dr.Rider has been unable to shoulder the responsibility of a family until he becomes energized by the perceived threat of Chatham. This splitting of authority marks the eventual splitting of the Rider family: Nettie marries Dr. Rider and persuades him to adopt little Freddy Rider, while Susan and Chatham take the rest of the family to Australia.

Although the novel ends with a scene of Dr. Rider and Nettie enjoying domestic tranquility, this use of a conventional romantic resolution does not obscure Nettie's tragic loss of power nor does it negate the transgressive

nature of her former dominion. Nettie's abdication of authority is the emotional climax of the novel--the one moment when Nettie breaks down--and this occurs when Nettie must say goodbye to Little Freddy, her favorite nephew:

> She dropped down on one knee beside the child, and clasped him to her in a passion of unrestrained tears and sobbing. . . . She could exercise no further self-control. . . . It was Freddy, and not the doctor, who had vanquished Nettie . . . He [Dr. Rider] took quiet possession of the agitated trembling creature *who had carried her empire over herself too far*. At last Nettie had broken down; and now he had it all his own way. (201 emphasis mine)

Freddy's tears trigger her outburst; his childish, "savage" grief becomes her excuse for "hysterical"/feminine behavior. In fact, she projects her own sorrow and anger onto a bewildered Freddy, who then becomes the excuse for her emotional outpouring. This passage reveals Nettie's need for those she supports (dominates/colonizes) and suggests the inter-dependency of the colonizer and the colonized. Yet this passage also highlights Dr. Rider's need to curtail Nettie's "empire" in order to fashion her into a proper wife.

Fred Rider: The Dissipated Colonial Adventurer

Fred Rider, the disreputable older brother of Dr. Rider, emigrated to Australia after failing to establish a medical

practice in England, and has returned penniless from Australia at the beginning of the novel. He is the negative representation of the male colonial adventurer: instead of returning home triumphantly wealthy, with a gold nugget and heightened sense of masculinity, (i.e. like George Talboys in Lady Audley's Secret) he arrives broke at his brother's doorstep and soon adds the further encumbrance of a large family of (colonial) dependents. Fred is first described as "a large indolent shabby figure prowling down the street" (70) and is characterized as a financial, emotional and moral burden within Dr. Rider's domestic economy.

Fred Rider's dependence on his younger brother, Dr. Rider, marks a breakdown of traditional British social authority. His dependence on Dr. Rider, and later Nettie, perverts the traditional order of authority. Fred Rider fled to Australia, the refuge of the disreputable, instead of fulfilling his familial expectations as "the clever elder brother, to whose claims everyone else was subordinated" (72). Yet Fred Rider fails to achieve even an illegal or dishonorable success; instead he brings his failed colonial lifestyle into Edward Rider's parlour. As an ex-colonist, Fred Rider is associated with vice: he is unemployed, tries to dessert his wife and children, and finally dies after a

drunken binge. Fred Rider's vices--tobacco and alcohol--derive from the products of the colonial slave trade. Thus, Fred represents the degenerating effects of the excesses produced by colonialism.

In contrast to the trope of the heroic male colonial adventurer, Fred Rider is portrayed as an emasculated, languid sultan who lives off of the energies of women. His character represents the anxieties of excess as he speculates about converting his brother's meager household goods into luxuries: "Mentally he appraised the prints over the mantleshelf, and reckoned how much of his luxuries might be purchased out of them" (71). He introduces the notions of waste, inactivity, indulgence and intemperance into the constricted household economy of Dr. Rider.

Unable to provide for his family, without any social function, Fred himself represents surplus; he is the "superfluous" man, a "useless hulk--[a] heavy encumbrance of a man, for whom hope and life were dead" (100). This representation of Fred as "surplus" is a curious inversion of the trope of the surplus woman: here, it is the male head of the household who is useless, whereas the spinster aunt is essential to the welfare of her family. The text intimates

that Fred is perhaps not even a "real" man and that his masculinity has been mistakenly posited onto Nettie:

> To think of a man that could do hundreds of things living like that! . . . One would think almost that Providence forgot sometimes, and put the wrong spirit into a body that did not belong to it. (117)

The character of Fred represents the failure of the male colonizer: he is an English professional with a ruined reputation whose efforts to start over in Australia fail and who is left with no money, moral authority or sense of responsibility. He is depicted as fundamentally without energy, emasculated by his dependence on his brother and Nettie. Fred Rider embodies the failure of the colonial system: he is the weak, corrupt colonizer who is maintained by the energies and surplus wealth of the colonized. It is a male character--Fred, the failed colonizer--who is linked with lower class forms of entertainment: he lounges in his brother's parlour reading "cheap novels" from the "circulating library" (69). His indolence is described as effeminate and faintly oriental:

> A sickening smell of abiding tobacco--not light whiffs of smoke, such as accompany a man's labours, but a dead pall of idle heavy vapour; and in the midst of all a man stretched lazily on the sofa, with his pipe laid on the table beside him, and a book in his soft, boneless, nerveless hands. A large man, interpenetrated with smoke and idleness and a certain dreary sodden dissipation, heated yet unexcited, reading a novel he has read half-a-dozen times before. (69)

The spectacle of the dissipated colonizer is linked to mass produced novels, thus associating tobacco, popular fiction, idleness, lack of virility (the "boneless, nerveless hands") with a failed masculinity of colonialism.

This characterization of Fred Rider as degenerate reader of mass produced novels reveals the text's complicated attitude toward its own genre. Popular literature of the mid-Victorian period, particularly what was designated as women's literature, was perceived as a commodity and hence devalued:

> [The] emphasis on mechanistic, commercial production, and passive, appetitive consumption, marked the sensation novel as a feminine form . . . Mass-produced for mass-consumption, based on repeated and hence predictable formulae, sensation fiction was by definition "feminine" according to the rules of a gendered discourse in which the masculine (positive) term was reserved for a work that offered itself as the unique expression of individual genius. (Pykett 31)[14]

The Doctor's Family was a popular, mass-produced novel, consumed primarily by women, yet it attempts to distinguish itself from more notorious genres, such as "sensation" fiction. Margaret Oliphant wrote several essays in Blackwood's Magazine criticizing sensation novels for their alleged overt sexuality and hence unrealistic portrayals of English women:

> Women driven wild with love . . . in fits of sensual passion . . . who give and receive burning kisses and frantic embraces . . . The peculiarity of it in England is that it is oftenest made from the woman's

> side--that it is women who describe those sensuous raptures--that this intense appreciation of flesh and blood, this eagerness of physical sensation, is represented as the natural sentiment of English girls.[15]

Oliphant links the frank sexuality of sensation novels to the pleasures of repetition inherent in the form of serial fiction:

> The violent stimulant of serial publication--of weekly publication, with its necessity for frequent and rapid recurrence of piquant situation and startling incident--is the thing of all others most likely to *develop the germ*, and bring it to *fuller and darker bearing*.[16]

The above passage characterizes serial fiction as a powerful narcotic that effects a moral illness. The imagery Oliphant uses to describe the ill-effects of sensational novels--a "germ" which will grow "fuller and darker"--suggests a fear of racial contamination. In addition, Oliphant's story, in its portrayal of the Fred Rider, links serial fiction with alcohol and tobacco and presents all three as the vices of a dissipated colonial.

The Doctor's Family represents serial novel reading as an emasculating, passive, consumption which undermines an authentic, productive domesticity. Nettie, the imported "colonial girl," rejects the romantic narrative and revitalizes the Rider household through her hyper-active, productive code of femininity. However, although Nettie asserts that she is "too busy" to read novels or to be the

subject of a romantic narrative, she is eventually consumed by the conventions of the popular novel: she marries.

Notes

1. See MaryAnn Leiby, in "Constructing `Nettie': A Battle of Discourses in The Doctor's Family."

2. As I discuss in my Introduction, fiction of the eighteen-sixties can be seen as reflecting the crisis in British colonialism that the Sepoy rebellion of 1857 highlighted. See Jenny Sharpe's Allegories of Empire for an extended analysis of the ways that the "Indian Mutiny" was represented in British fiction.

3. Daniel Cottom argues that George Eliot's notion of middle-class duty is that which "transgresses personal egoism and fosters a responsibility toward others" (Cottom 186).

4. The term, "the Angel in the House" derives from Coventry Patmore's poem of that title which champions the selflessness, purity and simplicity of a young Victorian lady. In Madwoman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar claim that the angelic wife creates a domestic space which is a refuge from the world of business and action (24). The ideal of the middle-class woman as the "Angel in the House" implies a "professional wife and mother who undertakes the practical details of household management" (Rowbotham 17) with "cheerful self-sacrifice" (43), and a "spiritual and moral superiority" (51).

5. See W.R. Greg's "Why Are Women Redundant?," for a discussion of mid nineteenth-century anxiety concerning the perceived "surplus" of single, unemployed women.

6. Nettie's overthrow is "violent" within the emotional economy of the novel.

7. See Gayatri Spivak's discussion of Jane Eyre in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." Critical Inquiry (Autumn), 12 (1): 243-61. Spivak criticizes earlier feminist critics who read the Jane Eyre as emancipatory,as a struggle

of an independent woman. Spivak criticizes Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of the novel in Madwoman in the Attic, who read Bertha Mason as the psychological double of Jane. Spivak argues this interpretation sidesteps the question of Bertha's treatment as a subject of imperialism; instead, argues Spivak, this view posits Bertha (the non-European other) as just a representation of the white Englishwoman's psyche. that the text denies the "native" woman (Bertha Mason) subjectivity and thereby endorses imperialism.

8. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism. New York: Knopf, 1993, 87.

9. Ibid., p.91.

10. I am referring to the Introduction of Culture and Imperialism where Said suggests that "feminist" works are often "egregiously overstated," "exclusivist," or "maudlin" (xxiv).

11. As the wife of Dr.Rider, Nettie appears as a member of the community in later novels set in Carlingford.

12. Margaret Oliphant wrote close to 125 books during her lifetime. Between the years 1861 to 1866--when "The Doctor's Family" was published--she wrote eight novels, a biography of Edward Irving, a translation of Montalembert's Monks of the West, and numerous magazine articles.

13. See Manning Clark's A Short History of Australia New York: Mentor, 1987, and his discussion of the history of emigration to Australia, specifically the notion of "surplus labor" in Britain.

14. Lyn Pykett, The 'Improper' Feminine. London: Routledge, 1992.

15. Margaret Oliphant, "Novels" Blackwood's 102, 259,

16. Margaret Oliphant, "Sensation Novels," Blackwood's (May 1862):567.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE SEXUALITY AND THE DISCOURSE OF IMPERIALISM IN JANE EYRE AND `COMETH UP AS A FLOWER

> The Eastern allusion bit me again. "I'll not stand you an inch in the stead of a seraglio," I said; "so don't consider me an equivalent for one. If you have a fancy for anything in that line, away with you, sir, to the bazaars of Stamboul, without delay, and lay out in extensive slave-purchases some of that spare cash . . ." Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, 297)

> I was not, I think, one of those fiery females whose passions beat their affections out of the field. And I really don't think that English women are given to flaming, and burning, and melting, and being generally combustible on ordinary occasions, as we are led by one or two novelists to suppose. (Rhoda Broughton, Cometh' Up As a Flower, 158)

The boundary between the domestic and the imperial, between "women's fiction" and the male adventure novel has been challenged in recent criticism, most notably in Edward Said's Culture and Imperialism.[1] Said's analysis of canonical British novels destabilizes the boundaries between the domestic and the imperial, between a narrative of courtship and the ideology of Britain's colonial expansion.[2] Unfortunately, Said's marginalization of feminist criticism keeps him from exploring the implications of gender as a site for the intersection of the discourses of imperialism and the domestic, particularly how the domestic novel defines the

value of domesticity and the qualities of "English womanhood" within the context of mid-Victorian colonialism.[3] Other recent works have attempted to tease out the implications of domestic novels' appropriation of issues of colonialism, arguing that these "feminine" texts "recontain the tensions of imperialism . . . [and] participate in the production of cultural meanings."[4]

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre (1847) and Rhoda Broughton's 'Cometh Up As a Flower (1867) both make numerous references to colonialism and the east and use the language of orientalism to define the subjectivity of the English woman by a series of identifications (or non-identifications) with a non-Western Other. Both texts employ what Suvendrini Perera terms "the language of orientalist misogyny": using images of despotism, seraglio (the harem) and sati (widow burning) to highlight western women's enslavement and oppression.[5] However, Perera argues that these comparisons often serve, not as a means of identification, but rather they work to differentiate the western woman from the "colonized or imagined 'oriental' female subject," while simultaneously positing the East as a monolithic, homogeneous entity. [6] Each heroine's sexuality is formulated against an image of the "oriental" woman, and thus, English femininity becomes a mark of transcendent value: the heroine represents a "pure" Englishness which is opposed to the exotic, threatening figure of the non-western woman.

In addition to defining the heroine's sexuality against the trope of the oriental woman, both novels represent the battle for domestic power as a struggle between despotic ruler and rebel slave. [7] The domestic space becomes the site in which issues of imperialism and orientalism are represented. In this chapter, I will explore how both texts represent a domestic space which is governed by "despotic" figures and how the heroine becomes linked to images of rebel slaves, thereby enacting the tensions of colonialism within the domestic realm. However, the ways that women and the domestic space are used to signify issues of colonialism and imperialism is more complicated; in each text the figure of the imperial adventurer is domesticated or feminized and ultimately maimed or killed. I will consider what this implies about the need to contain the violence and social disruption of imperialism.

Jane Eyre is composed of a series of genteel domestic interiors into which a powerless and dependent Jane is shipped, or imported: she is a friendless orphan at the Reed's, a charity pupil at the Lowood school, a governess at Thornfield, and she arrives nearly starved at Moor House. At each location Jane occupies a low social position and is financially dependent upon those who control the domestic space. The novel likens Jane's position as a marginalized woman to slavery: as a child she is described by John Reed as a "bad animal" and later by herself as a "rebel slave" (JE 3-6).

In each domestic space there occurs a power struggle between Jane and a despotic figure, and her subjectivity is formed in reaction to dominating/abusive male characters. John Reed, Rochester, and St. John Rivers are represented as a "slave driver," a "despot" and a cold-hearted tyrant, respectively. Jane rebels against John Reed's physical abuse, and although she tempers her earlier rebelliousness, she later refuses to be mastered by Rochester, rejects the self-effacing role as Rivers' wife, and finally marries a domesticated (feminized) Rochester.

Broughton's novel, _`Cometh Up As A Flower_, although it takes place in only one domestic setting, also concerns the power struggle between the heroine, Nelly Le Strange, and her despotic older sister, Dolly. Nelly's domestic sovereignty (her mother is dead and her father inept at household management) is undermined by the arrival of her sophisticated and worldly sister, Dolly. The battle between the two sisters is described as "a servile war" and a "state of open insurrection" (156). However, while _Jane Eyre_ charts the process of Jane outgrowing her identification with the rebel slave and locating female agency within the domestic authority of "female influence," Broughton's novel culminates with the heroine's martyrdom.[8] The tragic ending of Broughton's text--the deaths of both the heroine and the imperial adventurer--signals an anxiety concerning the break down of the landed gentry's economy.

In both Brontë's and Broughton's novels, the domestic (national) realm is positioned within the context of the external (imperial) empire. Jane Eyre's development--from her identification with the rebel slave to her position as a social equal of Rochester--is predicated on the death of Bertha Mason and upon Jane's inheritance. Similarly, as we will see, Broughton's heroine, Nelly Le Strange, maintains the bankrupt family estate with money she borrows from her lover, a colonial soldier who had participated in the Indian Mutiny and who later dies in India. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 is referred to explicitly in Broughton's novel, and yet it also serves as a metaphor for Nelly's overt rebellion against her sister. Although both novels are confined to the domestic/interior space, the colonial territories figure largely, if "peripherally," in key plot developments.

In addition, both novels contain heroes who are disenfranchised from the traditional wealth of their social status, forcing them to turn to the colonial sphere; Major M'Gregor joins the imperial army in India, while Rochester, a younger son, marries a West Indian heiress. The implications of this paradigm--the younger son as colonial adventurer--have been developed by Maaja Stewart in her study of Jane Austen's novels.[9] Stewart argues that the struggle between younger and older brothers in Austen's texts represents the shift from "residual estate ideology" to "emergent mercantilism" and that the heroines and the country estate become the site of this

confrontation.[10] Although the novels I address here exist within a later historical context, Stewart's argument--that the domestic subject is made to embody traditional "English" values--applies to the construction of both Jane Eyre and Nelly Le Strange. Both Jane and Nelly are represented as the embodiments of an English femininity that is contrasted to the sexuality of the non-white woman.

The use of the domestic woman as the site of middle class values is discussed by Nancy Armstrong in Desire and Domestic Fiction. Armstrong positions Jane Eyre within a tradition of women's fiction, which she argues helped to establish a middle-class domestic ideology:

> Narratives which seemed to be concerned solely with matters of courtship and marriage in fact seized the authority to say what was female, . . . This struggle to represent sexuality took the form of a struggle to individuate wherever there was a collective body, to attach psychological motives to what had been the openly political behavior of contending groups, and to evaluate these according to a set of moral norms that exalted the domestic woman over and above her aristocratic counter-part. I am saying the female was the figure, above all else, on whom depended the outcome of the struggle among competing ideologies. [11]

However, in her discussion of how women's novels "exalted the domestic woman over and above her aristocratic counterpart," Armstrong fails to address fully how the discourse of colonialism helped to establish a national, domestic middle-class identity.

For example, while Jane Eyre is "exalted" over the aristocratic Blanche Ingram, her femininity is defined also

against Rochester's first wife, Bertha Mason. In fact, Blanche and Bertha, both described as "dark" and "large," are linked by their imposing physiques and the implied sexuality. This resemblance suggests an association between aristocratic femininity and colonialism; Rochester suffers from his association with both before he is rescued by Jane.

Jane Eyre's role in the novel as the feminine moral agent is confirmed when she defines herself in opposition to the (imaginary) oriental woman. The passage quoted above from Jane Eyre is an excerpt from a sexually-charged conversation between Jane and Rochester, where Rochester teasingly compares Jane to a member of a "Turk's seraglio."[12] In response, Jane staunchly refuses to be coded as a member of Rochester's "seraglio" (harem) and instead maintains her independence and establishes her value as Rochester's social equal by asserting that she would "preach liberty to them that are enslaved" as a missionary, and "stir up a mutiny" against Rochester's despotism.[13] The image of the despot and his seraglio serves both as a vehicle for Jane and Rochester to discuss their sexual relations, as a metaphor for Rochester's libertine sexual history and his desire to "master" Jane. Jane's rejection of the role as a passive, silent, non-western woman and her positioning of herself as a missionary who will preach English values of liberty and female emancipation creates a radically new form of female subjectivity. [14] However, this move to create an emancipated female subjectivity within the

context of imperialism, as Gayatri Spivak has argued, sets up the liberation of the Western (white, middle-class) female subject, Jane Eyre, by denying the subjectivity of the non-Western or "native" woman.[15]

The issue of Jane's identification with the colonized other is further developed when Jane's subjectivity is defined against the licentiousness, rage and madness of Rochester's first wife, the West Indian "creole," Bertha Mason. However, the figure of Bertha Mason is racially ambiguous: she has been read by Gilbert and Gubar as Jane's psychological double, the figure who expresses Jane's rage and sexuality, and by Susan Meyer as the representation of the colonized, racial-mixed Other.[16] However, as Jenny Sharpe astutely points out, in the eighteen-forties the term "creole" referred to Caribbean slave-owners and was a pejorative term condemning the self-indulgence and immorality of the West Indian plantocracy:

> the paradox of being an individual in the domestic sphere is resolved by defining the English woman in relation to other women instead of to other men. In Jane Eyre, a domestic form of social agency is established through a national and racial splitting of femininity, with the creole woman serving as a figure of self-indulgence and the Oriental woman, of self-immolation.[17]

The ambiguous racial position of Bertha Mason--her position as "white" slave-owner in the West Indies and as the "non-white" other in England--is explored and recontextualized in Jean Rhys's pre-quel to Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea.[18] Although Rhys's novel cannot be used to substantiate Brontë's

character's racial identity, Rhys's novel does illuminate the precarious social position of West Indian slave owners.

Thus, Bertha's alleged madness and uncontrollable sexuality serve as a foil, not just to Jane's racial purity, but to her morality which is marked as outside of the decadent system of slave-run plantations. Yet while the text privileges Jane as morally superior to aristocratic women (Blanche Ingram), West Indian slave-owners (Bertha Mason) and immoral Frenchwomen (Céline), the text does implicate Jane within a discourse of imperialism in a number of ways, not just in the language of orientalism quoted above but in the circumstances of her marriage to Rochester. Jane's eventual triumph--her sudden financial independence and her subsequent marriage to Rochester--is predicated upon the fiery death of Rochester's first wife, a West Indian heiress, and on Jane's sudden inheritance from her uncle whose wealth came from Madeira, a port on the slave trade.

At the end of the novel Jane must choose between two forms of male imperialism: St. John Rivers' missionary work or Rochester's legacy as a colonial adventurer. Jane rejects the missionary project of St. John Rivers because it would be a "death" for her, and she chooses Rochester. Thus, Rochester (the material colonizer) is privileged over St. John Rivers (the spiritual colonizer). One way to read Jane's choice (and the novel's privileging of Rochester as romantic hero) is to see that only Rochester's "material colonizing" supports the

(feminized) domestic space: Jane and Rochester live on the wealth he brought back from the West Indies (Bertha's dowry). By contrast, life as a missionary's wife would be physical hardship in another country, outside of the realm of the national, domestic (feminized) space.

However, it is not merely Jane's logistical or legal status that link her to the discourse of imperialism; the rhetoric of female emancipation itself employs the language of imperialism. Jane Eyre's famous speech on the inevitability of female ambition occurs while she surveys the landscape surrounding Thornfield. While Jane's speech is certainly an articulation of frustrated female energy, her position as "overseer" of the land, looking out from the top of the estate, suggests a desire to master the surrounding territory:

> I . . . looked out afar over the sequestered field and hill . . . then I longed for **a power of vision which might overpass that limit** . . . I could not help it; the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes. . . . It is vain to say that human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility; they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. . . . Women . . . need exercise for their faculties, and **a field for their efforts** as much as their brothers do -- (JE 100-101)

Jane's need for a gaze which would "overpass" or expand the limit of the territory of Thornfield and her "restlessness" and desire for a broader "field" of activity can be read as the imperialist longing for new domain. Yet within the discourse of the domestic romance, Jane's ambition is confined

to gaining a fuller knowledge/possession of the hero, Rochester, himself a "colonial adventurer."

As I have discussed above, Rochester fits the trope of the colonial adventurer: he is the younger son who leaves England, arrives penniless in the colonies, yet manages to accrue a fortune and return home. He tells Jane explicitly that it was his racial superiority that enabled him to secure a Jamaican heiress: "Her family wished to secure me, because I was of good race; and so did she" (JE 290). However, the novel subverts the trope of the colonial adventurer by showing Rochester as having lost in his colonial enterprise; although he secures control over Bertha's wealth, he perceives himself as having been cheated in the marriage bargain.

Rochester, as colonial adventurer, performs a metaphoric "rape" of the colonized space and non-European woman. However, in Brontë's text, the colonial adventurer is positioned as the victim of the colonial venture; Rochester is in effect prostituted by his brother and father in exchange for Bertha mason's money. This twist, the move to define the colonial adventurer as victim not victimizer, serves two purposes: first, it excuses and humanizes the male colonial adventure; second, it offers an oblique critique of the colonial adventure. The colonial enterprise is represented as both necessary (to secure the wealth that supports the domestic space) and threatening (Rochester brings back the violence of

colonialism embodies in Bertha Mason and he himself is physically damaged by Bertha's rage).

The novel suggests that the colonial adventure, while it may bring wealth, ultimately contaminates and haunts Rochester and threatens Jane:

> In the eyes of the world I was doubtless covered with grimy dishonor, but I resolved to be clean in my own sight--and to the last I repudiated the contamination of her crimes, and wrenched myself from connexion with her mental defects. Still, society associated my name and person with hers. (JE 292)

Rochester has brought the guilt and violence of colonialism (embodied in the figure of Bertha Mason) into the domestic sphere. Even back in England with Bertha safely locked away, Rochester cannot entirely rid himself of the association, nor can he start a new life with Jane until he experiences a period of regeneration through suffering. Jane acts as the moral agent--Rochester calls her the "arbitress of [his] life--[his] genius for good or evil" (JE 297)--who is credited with reforming Rochester from a degenerate adventurer into a domesticated and feminized husband. In order to rehabilitate the colonial adventurer, Jane must be made to represent quintessential English national qualities. Rochester--disguised as a gypsy fortune-teller--reads Jane's face as articulating reason, judgment, and conscience:

> The forehead declares `Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are . . . but judgment shall still have the last word. . . . I have formed my plans . . . and in them I have attended to

> the claims of conscience, the counsels of reason.' (JE 189)

Yet Jane Eyre alone is not sufficient to liberate Rochester from the taint of his imperial adventuring: he must be physically maimed before his union with Jane can be achieved. This violence--the burning of Thornfield Hall, the death of Bertha and the blinding and disfiguring of Rochester, represents how the violence of colonialism is visited upon the domestic space. However, the violence of imperialism must first be enacted on the body of the colonial adventurer before it can contained within the domestic space.

The burning of Thornfield is a dramatic representation of the power of colonialism to devastate the domestic space. Also, in order for Rochester and Jane to achieve peaceful domestic union at Ferndean, Rochester must be transformed from hyper-masculine imperial adventurer to a more feminized, dependent domestic partner.

> He descended the one step, and advanced slowly and gropingly towards the grass plot. Where was his daring stride now? Then he paused, as if he knew not which way to turn. He lifted his hand and open his eyelids; gazed black . . . with straining effort. (413)

The final union of Rochester and Jane Eyre is between a financially independent woman and a crippled man whose sexual and imperial adventuring has ended. His colonial adventuring has been linked to his sexuality; he was, as I have discussed above, prostituted by his family in order to secure the West Indian wealth of Bertha Mason.

Both Jane Eyre and Broughton's novel, `Cometh Up As A Flower (which I discuss below) contain heroines who embody alternative codes of femininity, which are defined against the figure of the oriental woman. However, Jane Eyre is also positioned against the privilege and ambition of Blanche Ingram; yet Jane "triumphs" over Blanche Ingram's conventional beauty and class privilege through her very lack of feminine guile or self-conscious charm. It is this trope of "natural" femininity, in which an artless and penniless heroine secures both the romantic love and the wealth which has been denied to the artful, scheming villainess, that links Broughton's novel with Jane Eyre. [19]

Broughton's immensely popular novel, subtitled, "An Autobiography," is written as the death-bed narrative of the young Nelly Le Strange. Like Jane Eyre, Nelly is motherless; however, she lives with her ailing father on their bankrupt country estate. [20] Nelly falls in love with a colonial soldier, Major M'Gregor, but is forced--through the sinister machinations of her sister, Dolly--to marry the wealthy and benign Sir Hugh Lancaster. Nelly describes her marriage to Sir Hugh as "slavery" and her wedding as a "pyre." Once she hears of M'Gregor's death in India, she dies of consumption, but only after having forgiven her sister.

In contrast to Jane Eyre's mobility and self-determination, Nelly Le Strange lives in isolation and evidences little agency in her life: She succumbs to the

charms of the first handsome officer who arrives; she does not escape the machinations of her "despotic" sister, Dolly; she is forced into a loveless marriage with her neighbor, the boorish Sir Hugh Lancaster; and she dies a martyr's death. Yet both Nelly Le Strange and Jane Eyre function to transform the figure of the colonial adventurer from a sexually threatening, potentially immoral character into a domesticated or feminized hero; thus, the domestic novel legitimizes the colonial adventuring, while at the same time it shows the imperial project as threatening to the heroine and crippling to the male adventurer.[21]

Nelly's Le Strange's moral (and narrative) power lies in what is represented as her natural sexuality and her graceful acceptance of her role as martyr, qualities which are depicted in the novel as contrasting (Nelly renounces her romantic passion when she prepares to die), but which, I argue, coexist within a rhetoric of orientalism\discourse of imperialism. In the quotation which opens this chapter, Nelly constructs her identity as an English woman in opposition to the trope of the overly-passionate/ self-immolating (i.e. sati) oriental woman. However, this nationalist rhetoric is at odds with her narrative, which posits her infatuation with the colonial officer, Major M'Gregor, (and her eventual death from consumption or a broken heart) as results of her passionate nature: "My happiness that night was not sober: it was limitless, frenzied, drunken" (110). However, Nelly is forced

to marry Sir Hugh in order to save her father from "the greasy Jews," (355) who threaten to repossess the family estate. The Le Strange family estate symbolizes a traditional, landed gentry economy which is being threatened by industrial mercantilism, epitomized by tradesmen from Manchester and "Jews." At the beginning of the novel Nelly describes the threat to her family's home from industrialist outsiders:

> our many thousands had dwindled to very few hundreds, and our fair acres passed into the hands of Manchester gents with fat, smug faces, who waged a war of extermination against the letter H, and used big words were little ones would have done better. So the poor old house was very much out of repair, and there was no money wherewith to patch up its stout old walls. (8)

The novel describes in detail Nelly's attempts at domestic management; she sells her watch to pay the butcher and she wears out of fashion gowns to the local ball. Yet, this portrait of genteel poverty is accompanied by numerous anti-semitic remarks:

> our affairs had become quite desperate; the children of Israel had come down upon us like locusts; a dreadful man with a hook nose, thick lips, and a greasy Hebrew face had come to take an inventory of the furniture and movables. (307)

These remarks are significant when read within the context of the novel's hostility toward not only "greasy Jews," but toward the market, tradespeople, and its representation of marriage as a market.

Dolly--encoded as eastern femininity--articulates the representation of marriage as an economic exchange in which femininity is carefully marketed:

> "I would swear to love, honour, and obey, not him, not him (with a gesture of contempt), but his £12,000 a year, his French cook, and his opera box. . . . if he had but money, money! money! money is power; money is a god!" (237)

Later, when Nelly criticizes marriage as a "market" Dolly extends her metaphor into a grotesque, violent image of women as animals being sold:

> "Market indeed! . . . This little pig does not go to market, and very sorry she is for it too; she might have all her teeth drawn and knocked out, or gnashed out, and nobody would be the wiser. Alas . . . there are no pig dealers in this Sahara." (128)

Although Dolly's cynicism is presented as almost parody, the violence in her description of the marriage market coincides with the novel's representations of marriage as slavery. The novel implicitly marks the English institution of marriage as barbaric and misogynistic. Nelly describes her role as bride thus: "the poor lamb's throat was to be cut; the female martyr ascend [sic] the pyre" (333). Earlier, Nelly describes Sir Hugh's courtship in the language of the slave market: "that accursed, girdling arm is still round me--my buyer's arm--that arm which seems to be burning into my flesh like a brand" (326). Although Sir Hugh is represented as a benign, even gentle husband, the circumstances of the marriage--that Nelly was <u>sold</u> in order to maintain the family estate--are intolerable to Nelly. However, instead of directing her anger at her husband--the "slave-owner"--Nelly focuses her resentment at Dolly, the slave-trader. Nelly's depiction of

the wife as tortured slave evolves (or slips) into the image of Christ's crucifixion:

> I would have hung all day beneath an Eastern sky, nailed hand and foot to a cross, while soul and body parted slowly--slowly--in unimagined anguish, would have been torn asunder, stoned, burnt, readily, yea, most joyfully, if thereby I could have purchased for myself the power to be fitly revenged on [Dolly] . . . (373)

The use of slavery as a metaphor for marriage, and the slippage above linking slaves to christ is curious when read in conjunction with Nelly's father's support for the Confederacy. The linking of Nelly's father--an impoverished gentleman who cannot maintain the family estate and therefore urges his daughter to accept a loveless marriage--with the southern slave-owners suggests a strong critique of British landed gentry.

In Broughton's text the "despotic" figure is Dolly, Nelly's older and conventionally beautiful sister who is positioned as the upholder of self-calculated, contrived femininity. Nelly describes Dolly by using the language of orientalism: "her languid eyes . . . look out of place anywhere but in a seraglio" (136); "Dolly sat through the long hours . . . like Vishnoo . . . in the shining heart of the Swerga" (172); "Dolly's . . . subtle Eastern sweetness" (334). On one hand, the depiction of Dolly as "oriental" re-works the trope of the Eastern woman as essentially deceptive and sinful; however, the character of Dolly also functions as a foil for Nelly's characterization as more "English."

Paradoxically, this construction of Nelly--as representing a more "natural" English femininity--implies that English femininity is linked to an explicit sexuality, while "eastern" femininity is artificial and commercial.

Nelly's rhetoric of romantic love appears childish and simplistic in comparison; Nelly defends the values of tradition and aristocracy against the more mercenary motives of her sister, Dolly: "You, . . . put paint, and good eating . . . and hot-water pipes above honour and glory and Cressy and Agincourt" (129). The novel privileges Nelly's romanticism by glorifying her martyrdom and her devotion to her father and family honor. This devotion to her father and willingness to die after the death of M'Gregor can be read as a representation of sati (the practice of burning widows along with their husbands).

While the subversiveness of Jane Eyre lies in her representation as powerful and autonomous despite her powerless social position, Nelly Le Strange is distinctive in the frank sexuality of her narrative. While Jane Eyre recognizes her own value as independent from class status, beauty or money, Nelly's value lies in her (contrived) lack of awareness of her own beauty or charm: "Sometimes I feared I was distressingly ugly. There was nothing neat, or smooth, or regular about my face, and oh those carrotty locks!" (19). Broughton's novel constructs and naturalizes a feminine sexuality which is represented in opposition to the calculated

machinations of her older sister, Dolly, who embodies a femininity which is encoded as an unnatural and self-consciously constructed. However, Nelly's "unself-conscious, "natural" beauty is revealed to be, in fact, quite conscious of itself:

> A very miserable-looking face the looking-glass gave back to me, but a very lovely one, as I could not help seeing: lovelier in its colourless, hopeless wistfulness, with ts great blue eyes, and its ruddy, billowing hair, than even Dolly's . . . (334)

The celebratory sexuality of Nelly's story is allowed by framing her narrative as a deathbed confession; thus, her sexuality is made permissible under the guise of her final religious repentance: "All the love and aspirations I had to bestow had been squandered on that intense earthly passion which seemed to be eating up body and soul. It was too late to mend now, but I was sorry it had been so" (414). Yet, this moralistic framing does not entirely defuse the heavy-handed rhetoric of romantic love that marks the bulk of Nelly's narrative; rather, Nelly's premature death marks her as a romanticized and aesthetized object.[22] She dies young, while still beautiful and still under the thrall of her first love. In addition, her martyr's death expunges the sinful excess of her sexuality.

The only alternative to the slavery of the marriage market presented in the novel is the colonial adventurer. The relationship between Nelly and M'Gregor is represented as existing <u>outside</u> of social conventions, economic exchange, and

sexual propriety (in fact, most of their clandestine meetings are outdoors). M'Gregor, a member of genteel society but with a reputation, is not a man of property; he is characterized primarily as an aesthetic object. His inability to secure a fortune, either through traditional inherited wealth or through colonial adventuring is what causes the deaths of both he and Nelly. In contrast to the conventional resolution of Jane Eyre, the tragic ending of Broughton's novel suggests that a "natural" English femininity cannot survive in a market economy, and that colonial adventuring is a dangerous, unproductive enterprise.

Notes

1. Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, New York: Knopf, 1993.

2. For example, in his reading of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, he points out that the structure of patriarchal authority and wealth -- embodied in Sir Thomas Bertram -- which supports Mansfield Park derives from a system of colonialism and slavery which is not articulated in the novel. Said's most useful point however, is his analysis of Fanny Price as an "imported commodity" who is paid for by Sir Thomas's colonial wealth and who supplies a missing morality for the Bertram family:

> [Thomas Bertram] understands . . . what has been missing in the education of his children, and he understands it in the terms paradoxically provided for him by . . . the wealth of Antigua and the imported example of Fanny Price . . . What was wanted within was in fact supplied by the wealth derived from a West Indian plantation and a poor provincial relative, both bought to Mansfield Park and set to work.

3. I am referring to the Introduction of Culture and Imperialism where Said suggests that feminist works are often "egregiously overstated," "exclusivist," or "maudlin" (xxiv).

4. Maaja A. Stewart, Domestic Realities and Imperial Fictions: Jane Austen's Novels in Eighteenth-Century Contexts (1993), page 2-3. Also see Sara Mills, The Discourse of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism (1991); Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Literature and Transculturation (1992);Jenny Sharpe, Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text (1993); Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (1993); Firdous Azim, The Colonial Rise of the Novel (1993); Suvendrini Perera, Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from Edgeworth to Dickens (1991); and David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration (1993).

5. Suvendrini Perera, Reaches of Empire: The English Novel from
Edgeworth to Dickens, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1991.

6. Perera, p. 82.

7. In chapter two of Jane Eyre Jane refers to herself as a "rebel slave" (JE 6); while in `Cometh Up As a Flower Nelly Le Strange describes her conflict with her older sister as "a state of open insurrection" (CUAF 156).

8. In Allegories of Empire: The Figure of the Woman in the Colonial Text, Jenny Sharpe read Jane Eyre as offering a "female influence" which is within the domestic space, and in the colonial space signified by St. John Rivers' missionary project (54).

9. Maaja Stewart, Domestic Realities and Imperial Fictions (1993)

10. Stewart, page 3.

11. Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987, p.5.

12. Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, New York: Bantam Books, 1847.

13. Ibid., 297-8.

14. See Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of Jane Eyre in The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

15. Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," in Race, Writing, and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986.

16. Gilbert and Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic and Susan Meyer, "Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of Jane Eyre," Victorian Studies winter 1990.

17. Sharpe, 47.

18. Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea, New York: Norton, 1982.

19. Although Nelly does not want to marry the wealthy Sir Hugh, it is still represented as a triumph that he is attracted to Nelly's "natural," beauty over the contrived machinations of other women.

20. Curiously, all of the heroines I discuss in the dissertation--Lady Audley, Nettie Underwood, Jane Eyre, Nelly Le Strange, and Esther Lyon--are without mothers. Perhaps this signals an anxiety over the lack of traditional female role models for women within the imperial project?

21. In Jane Eyre Rochester is blinded by the fire that Bertha Mason starts and the hero of Broughton's novel, Colonel M'Gregor, dies in India.

22. Tania Modleski, in Loving With a Vengeance (New York: Methuen,1982, p.18) discusses the popularity of the heroine's deathbed scene in women's romance novels, starting with Richardson's Clarissa. Modleski argues that these deathbed scenes, while they extend the traditional passivity of women roles, also allow for the heroine (and female reader) a moment of power.

CHAPTER FIVE
GEORGE ELIOT'S FELIX HOLT: THE ILLEGITIMACY OF THE COLONIAL ENTREPRENEUR

> Harold . . . was not the marrying man. . . . Western women were not to his taste: they showed a transition from the feeble animal to the thinking being, which was simply troublesome. Harold preferred a slow-witted large-eyed woman, silent and affectionate, with a load of black hair weighing much more heavily than her brains. He had seen no such woman in England, *except one whom he had brought with him from the East*.
> (Eliot, Felix Holt 454-55, emphasis mine)[1]

Felix Holt, set during the first Reform Bill of 1832 and titled for the novel's hero, a working-class Radical, is often regarded as George Eliot's "political novel."[2] Yet, even the novel's graphic depiction of mob violence that follows a local election is eclipsed by the intricacies of the novel's domestic and romantic intrigues.[3] The narrative of radical politics is often regarded as overshadowed by the birth-mystery plot involving Esther Lyon and by the intensity of Eliot's portrayal of Mrs. Transome--a gentlewoman discontented with her marriage, her former lover, and the long-awaited return of her favorite son.

Critics have noted the centrality of Mrs. Transome in Felix Holt. F.R. Leavis argues that "it is in the part of Felix Holt dealing with Mrs. Transome that George Eliot becomes one of the great creative artists" (69); while Terry

Eagleton claims that Mrs. Transome is the novel's "displaced center" (117).[4] Yet, instead of reading Mrs. Transome, as Henry James does, as "unnatural" or "superfluous" to a presupposed main plot, I propose that the strength of her narrative suggests a provocative link between the political /imperial and the domestic/romantic.[5] It is precisely this connection, between the struggle for (feminine) domestic power and the presence of the colonial, that the above critics have misread. Even a critic such as Deirdre David, who links the female domestic concerns with male political action, insists on maintaining that dichotomy. She argues that

> The male plot of corrupt contention for political leadership is so undermined by the female plot of abandoned mothers and illegitimate children that the political meaning of Felix Holt may be interpreted as a refutation of male political action. (199)[6]

While the domestic tragedy of Mrs. Transome's adulterous affair with the lawyer Jermyn and its humiliating aftermath does destroy her son's social identity, David's argument--that the female, "anarchic," emotional power of Mrs. Transome undermines the male political ambitions of her son--upholds the division between the male/political and the female /domestic that I wish to challenge.[7]

This chapter focuses on what is represented as the central tragedy of the novel--the remorse of Mrs. Transome--and discusses how the figure of the colonial entrepreneur, Harold Transome, is implicated in his mother's ruin. I argue that the novel offers an alternative code of femininity, in

the characterization of Esther Lyon, which involves a renunciation of social ambition. Unlike the figure of the "female schemer," who employs self-conscious charms to enact a metaphoric colonization, Esther Lyon renounces both feminine gentility and the desire for social status.[8] Esther Lyon rejects the attentions of the colonial entrepreneur (Harold Transome), yet her renunciation of ambition does not place her outside the discourse of colonialism: Esther's marriage to Felix Holt implicates her in his project of colonizing the poor.

The closed fictional community of Felix Holt is disrupted by references to the foreign, the exotic, and the colonial. At the beginning of Chapter 5, Mr Lyon mutters over a "missionary report" while he waits to confront Felix Holt (139), and Mrs. Holt describes her late husband's eloquence by stating that he could have "[gone] and preach[ed] to the blacks" (135). These references suggest that the non-white other is an acknowledged, if peripheral presence that defines the worthiness or competence of the Englishman.

The presence of the "east" intrudes upon the community most explicitly in the form of Harold Transome. The novel opens with the long-awaited return of Harold Transome, the younger son of Mrs. Transome, who had left England as a young man to seek his fortune in the East (Smyrna), became a colonial entrepreneur, and returns home with the relative fortune of L150,000.[9] The death of his older brother allows

Harold Transome to assume management of an almost-bankrupt Transome estate. However, this return of the favorite son and wealthy foreign businessman is problematic; while Harold Transome improves the material conditions of the family estate, he is portrayed as fundamentally alienated from the values of the community and his family. The alienation is represented as a tragedy within the emotional economy of the novel and manifests itself in Harold Transome's uninterest in his mother and in his callous, managerial approach to the family estate.

As the passage above suggests, Harold returns with more than just an "orientalized" attitude toward women; he brings disruptive, tangible evidence of his foreignness: little Harry. This intrusion of the foreign/exotic into Eliot's closed fictional community and the gap in the narrative concerning the circumstances of Harold Transome's marriage--was little Harry's mother a slave?--destabilizes the novel's social structure, particularly the feminine, domestic space. Harold's "orientalism" foreshadows the discovery of his illegitimacy; moreover, his desire for Eastern women suggests a lack of respect for English femininity.

Felix Holt concerns two almost separate plots--the "political" narrative concerning the working-class radical, Felix Holt, and the story of the Transomes. The two narratives are linked by the character of Esther Lyon, who is courted by both men and whose rejection of Harold Transome (and of her

rightful claim to the Transome estate) and acceptance of Felix Holt illustrates the novel's privileging of the moral politics of self-abnegation and working-class loyalty that Felix espouses.

Both Felix Holt and Harold Transome are similarly positioned as returning sons who institute "foreign" ideologies, which disrupt their mothers' domestic economies. Felix Holt abolishes his family's quack medicine business, and Harold Transome divests his mother of her former authority as manageress of the estate. Although both characters have constructed their political identities as "radical," the text suggests that it is their respective attitudes toward women that mark their "difference" from the values of the community. Both characters position themselves as unwilling to marry, because to acknowledge the authority of the maternal (feminine domestic sphere) would mean to relinquish their new-found authority.

Felix Holt claims that marriage would require him to forgo his moral and political projects and adopt a middle-class (feminine) social ambition:

> foolish women spoil men's lives. Men can't help loving them, and so they make themselves slaves to the petty desires of petty creatures. That's the way those who might do better spend their lives for nought -- get checked in every great effort -- toil with brain and limb for things that have no more to do with manly life than tarts and confectionery. (212)

He rejects both his mother's desires for social mobility and the traditional codes of middle-class femininity embodied in

Esther Lyon. Although Felix relents in his early anti-romantic rhetoric and his radicalism is tempered with the values of romantic love, he adheres to his (chosen) working-class identity, and his marriage to Esther requires her to sacrifice her identity as a gentlewoman (as well as her inheritance). Both Felix Holt and Harold Transome must undergo a re-education to learn the value of the feminine bourgeois principle: Felix Holt realizes the value of Esther as a helpmate in civilizing the poor and Harold Transome unlearns his orientalist attitude toward women when he is presented with an example of English femininity.

Harold Transome: The Illegitimate Colonial Entrepreneur

Harold Transome claims to have "oriental" tastes concerning women, and his foreign style of administration will not acknowledge (western) female authority: "`I hate English wives; they want to give their opinion about everything. They interfere with a man's life'" (94). However, although the arrivals of both Felix Holt and Harold Transome disrupt their families and community, there is a marked difference in the "foreign" values they import. Felix Holt's new class identity (or at least rejection of his parents' desires for social mobility) and nostalgic desire for an organic working-class culture is a result of his travels through England, while Harold Transome returns home a foreigner with a "dark" son.

While abroad, Harold Transome maintained his self-identity as an English gentleman and assumes he can resume his old social position in England; however, his years living in the east and his foreign marriage mark him as "other" according to the novel's codes of masculinity.

The change in Harold Transome--from a youthful English gentleman to middle-aged colonial businessman--manifests itself in his attitude toward women. The passage quoted above describes Harold's professed aversion to English women--although his later interest in Esther challenges this--by contrasting them to a stereotype of the "silent and affectionate" (i.e. submissive and dumb) eastern woman. The narrative voice here is ambiguous; it is unclear if this "language of orientalist misogyny" is attributable to Harold or to the narrator. Is the passage a critical representation of Harold's orientalism, or does the novel sacrifice the subjectivity of the eastern woman in order to highlight the mistreatment of the individual subjectivity of western women?[10] It is puzzling that the narrative does not attempt to explain the eastern woman "he had brought with him from the east." Is the reader to assume that Harold Transome imported an Eastern slave to England, and would this woman necessarily be his mistress? This gap or "strategic absence" of the Eastern woman's narrative in a novel concerned with Western (British) women's subjectivity points to "the place where the colonial system of meaning breaks down" (Sharpe 23).[11]

Later, when Harold Transome attempts to woo Esther Lyon, he admits that his son's mother "`had been a slave--was bought, in fact'" (541). It is unclear whether Harold married a former slave, or if he uses the term "wife" to describe his relationship with his former slave-mistress. Harold cannot conceive that this knowledge might affect Esther; the implication of this scene is that Harold (perhaps unknowingly) is operating within a foreign set of sexual codes.

> It was impossible for Harold to preconceive the effect this had on Esther. His natural disqualification for judging of a girl's feelings was heightened by the blinding effect of an exclusive object -- *which was to assure her that her own place was peculiar and supreme*. Hitherto Esther's acquaintance with Oriental love was derived chiefly from Byronic poems, and this had not sufficed to adjust her mind to a new story, where the Giaour concerned was giving her his arm. She was unable to speak. (541 emphasis mine)

Esther's reaction is ambiguous: on one hand, the passage suggests that she is repulsed by Harold's relations with an eastern slave, yet the comparison to Byron's "Giaour" denotes a romantic heroism.[12] Again, the text does not clarify the relationship between Harold and his foreign "wife." It seems notable that a novel that elaborately explains characters' claims to inheritance and their family origins would leave this question of little Harry's lineage murky.[13] Even if we read the novel as critiquing Harold's strategy of effacing the eastern woman in order to allow Esther (the Western woman) a privileged, "unique" position, the narrative itself upholds Harold's effacement of his Eastern "wife" by reproducing the lack or absence of her story.

The eastern woman is not allowed her own subject position, but instead is used to represent the English woman's sexual subjugation. Although Harold Transome's past involvement with female slaves is left unclear, the text rather explicitly encodes Harold as a despot who shows his tyrannical attitude in his relationships with both Mrs. Transome and Esther Lyon. Although the novel does not explicitly mark Harold Transome as a slave-owner, his relationships with women are described using the language of slavery and images of bondage. Despite Harold's politic civility and attempts to charm her, Esther perceives that "Harold had a *padded yoke* ready for the neck of every man, woman, and child that depended on him" (538 emphasis mine), and that marriage to Harold would be "a *silken bondage* that arrested all motive, and was nothing better than a well-cushioned despair" (592 emphasis mine). This description of female subjegation as comfortable, even luxurious, is furthered below in my discussion of the Indian shawl.

While Harold is characterized as a subtle dictator, however, it is significant that his mastery is not overt:

> Harold [had] practical cleverness--[a] masculine ease with which *he governed everybody and administered everything about him*, without the least harshness, and with a facile goodnature which yet was not weak. (524, emphasis mine)

Harold's authority is described as an <u>administrative</u> power that seeks to efface itself in its very expression, much like the colonial authority of the mid-Victorian period, which

sought to maintain an "informal empire" or "spheres of influence" rather than exhibit formal political authority.[14]

Nevertheless, despite his covert style of control, Harold assumes total domestic authority. He uses his colonial wealth to improve the estate and establish himself as an English politician; yet his interest in England is presented as more dispassionate and acquisitive than affectionate:

> "I often thought, when I was at Smyrna, that I would buy a park with a river through it as much like the Lapp as possible. Gad, *what fine oaks those are opposite! Some of them must come down though*. . . . All the country round here lies like a map in my brain. A deuced pretty country too; but the people were a stupid set of old Whigs and Tories." (95-6 emphasis mine)

Harold Transome plans to "improve" the estate by cutting down the oaks and restructuring the tenant system--plans which disregard and disrupt the management system his mother has employed all of the years he has been abroad. Harold does not recognize the validity of his mother's form of domestic government. Harold's disrespectful attitude toward his mother's ability to handle the estate (and toward English women in general) suggests that the authority of the returned colonial entrepreneur cannot coexist within the context of the feminine, domestic (national) authority.[15]

Mrs. Transome: The Displacement of Female Domestic Authority

Before Harold Transome's return, Mrs. Transome ran the Transome estate: "I am used to be [sic] the chief bailiff and

sit in the saddle two or three hours every day" (95). She enjoyed both the practical authority of managing the estate and the symbolic power of sovereign: "she liked every little sign of power her lot had left her. She liked that a tenant should stand bareheaded below her as she sat on horseback" (106). However, upon his return Harold makes it clear that his mother's reign is over: "`You shall have nothing to do now but be grandmamma on satin cushions'" (95). While the text positions Mrs. Transome as the object of the reader's sympathy, there is also an implication that both her unhappiness and her deposition are deserved. By committing adultery and usurping her husband's authority, she has transgressed the boundaries of feminine behavior. The novel uses a language of imperialism to depict her reign over the Transome estate:

> She had a high-born imperious air which would have marked her as an object of hatred and reviling by a revolutionary mob. Her person . . . would have fitted an *empress* in her own right, *who had to rule in spite of faction*, to dare the violation of treaties and dread retributive *invasions*, to *grasp after new territories*, to be defiant in desperate circumstances, and to feel a woman's hunger of the heart forever unsatisfied. (104, emphases mine)

The passage suggests that Mrs. Transome's (imperial) ambition is despotic in nature and also that her desire for sovereignty frustrates any chance for her romantic fulfillment. Clearly, this is a choice--between marital happiness and social ambition--that Esther must make when deciding whether or not to pursue her claims of inheritance against the Transomes.

Upon returning home, Harold Transome presents his mother with Indian shawls, imported commodities from his colonial entrepreneurship: "`you are straight as an arrow still; you will carry the Indian shawls I have brought you as well as ever'" (93). The Indian shawl is often mentioned in many mid-Victorian texts, most notably, Brontë's Jane Eyre, Gaskell's Cranford, and Emily Eden's The Semi-Detached House; it is used to signify an aristocratic femininity that is maintained by colonial adventuring[16]. Harold Transome uses the shawl as a way of placating his mother and silencing her complaints; he insists upon transforming her into an ornamental woman and the shawl helps to create an image of an indulged (and powerless) grandmother. When Harold Transome covers his mother in an Indian shawl, he symbolically displaces her authority and transforms her from an active (imperial) agent into the passive object of his own colonizing.[17] Harold Transome's act of covering his mother with an Indian shawl encodes her as passive, as an eastern space under his domination. Mrs. Transome allows herself to be "disguised" by the shawl and the construction of upper-class femininity of which the shawl is a part, yet this mask adds to her imprisonment within that role.

Thus, the text characterizes Mrs. Transome as both the imperial empress of the Transome estate and later as the colonized subject of her son. This double move--the representation of Eliot's heroines as both colonizer and

colonized--is discussed by Susan Meyer in her article on Daniel Deronda.[18] Meyers argues that Gwendolen is initially described as "imperialistic" in her dealings with her family and in her early courtship with Grandcourt; however, once she marries Grandcourt, "it is Gwendolen, not Grandcourt, who is subject to another's empire; it is Gwendolen, not Grandcourt, whom the narrator compares to a slave" (735). Both Gwendolen and Mrs. Transome lose their "domestic empires" and become resigned to powerless positions at the novels' ends, suggesting perhaps, the futility of a female imperial energy. Meyers argues that Daniel Deronda offers a possibility of escape through his new racial identitiy; while in Felix Holt Esther Lyon escapes the fate of Mrs. Transome through her marriage to Felix.

Mrs. Transome's good blood and aristocratic bearing, the novel suggests, allow her to wear these vestiges of the colonial venture. However, while the Indian shawl marks the relationship between colonial trading and the feminine space, it also cloaks the western woman in an aesthetics of the exotic. Mrs. Transome uses the shawl as a costume with which she disguises her unhappiness over her marginalized role in her son's life:

> Denner was putting the finishing touches to Mrs.Transome's dress by throwing an Indian scarf over her shoulders, and so completing the contrast between the majestic lady in costume and the Hecuba-like woman whom she had found half an hour before. (FH 489)

Mrs. Transome's bitter disappointment over her son's inability

to feel affection for her or even acknowledge her subjectivity foreshadows a series of other disillusionments that Harold Transome engenders in the novel. Harold Transome fails in each of his social roles--as prodigal son, Radical candidate, and suitor of Esther--and these failures culminate in the final revelation of his illegitimacy. Although the novel does not explicitly suggest a link between colonial entrepreneurship and illegitimacy, it seems to suggest that the Transome lineage, which was based on shoddy legal maneuvering, fittingly concludes with the abdication of the foreign businessman. The novel's implicit condemnation of Harold--he is dismissive of the pre-existing form of (domestic) government, concerned only with profit, and is finally proven to have no legitimate claim to the estate--implicates the colonial project.

The breakdown of the Transome family line is symbolized by the characterization of Harold Transome's son, "little Harry." Little Harry, half Turkish, is received by his grandmother as an unwelcome embarrassment; she is angry that her son had secretly married a foreign woman, and she finds no solace or source of hope in her "dark" and foreign grandson. Instead of presenting him as the future heir to the Transome estate, the text represents little Harry as the savage, exotic other:

> This creature, with the soft brown cheeks, low forehead, great black eyes, tiny well-defined nose, fierce biting tricks towards every person and thing he disliked, and insistence on entirely occupying those he

> liked . . . hardly ever talk[ed], but preferred making inarticulate noises, . . . (491-2)

Even little Harry's inability to speak English--very reasonable for a three year old who grew up in a foreign country--is marked in the text as the willfulness of an inscrutable savage:

> But what old Mr. Transome thought was the most wonderful proof of an almost preternatural cleverness was, that Harry would hardly ever talk, but preferred making inarticulate noises, or combining syllables after a method of his own. "He can talk well enough if he likes," said Gappa, evidently thinking Harry, like the monkeys, had deep reasons for his reticence. (492)

Of course, foreign languages often sound like "inarticulate noises" to those unfamiliar with them; thus, the text is highlighting the inability of the English to comprehend the foreign, which creates an absence of the foreign narrative.

Little Harry's antagonism, his outright violence toward Mrs. Transome, symbolizes the violence of her loss of sovereignty. Her quiet acceptance of this abuse early on in the novel signals her awareness of her own powerlessness:

> Harry laid hold of her arm with his teeth, and bit with all his might. Happily the stuffs upon it were some protection, but the pain forced Mrs. Transome to give a low cry. . . . "Oh thank you, it is nothing," said Mrs. Transome,biting her lip and smiling alternately. (178)

However, there is a slippage in the text's representation of little Harry: he is shown as both an exotic, pre-literate savage and as a willful, imperial ruler.

Little Harry is not portrayed as a "noble savage," but as a vindictive and violent despot. In every scene, little Harry

is depicted in an act of cruelty, usually towards his feeble-minded grandfather:

> Mr. Transome with a cord around his waist, [was] playing a very poor-paced horse for a black-maned little boy about three years old, who was urging him on with loud encouraging noises and occasional thumps from a stick which he wielded with some difficulty. (177)

This vignette, and a later scene where little Harry is described riding a make-shift "chariot," acts out the drama of imperial tyranny. Alternately depicted as a savage and a despot, little Harry represents the violence and the social anarchy that Harold Transome's foreign adventuring introduces into the English community, and it also foreshadows the disintegration of the legitimacy of the Transome family lineage.

Esther Lyon: the Feminine Bourgeois Principle

The possibility of Harold Transome marrying Esther Lyon is the Transomes' last chance of legally maintaining the rights to their estate. Additionally, Esther is represented as the only way that Harold can cleanse himself of the contaminating attitude of orientalist misogyny. However, in order to become this feminine principle of salvation and moral agency, Esther Lyon must undergo a transformation brought on by Felix Holt's violent radicalism.

In her article, "Why Political Novels Have Heroines," Ruth Yeazell argues that the "love interest" in political

novels provides a "cover," or a "refuge" from representations of violence:

> these novels entertain the possibility of violence, even half-sympathize with it, only to take refuge at critical moments in the representation of female innocence, exchanging a politically dangerous man for a sexually unaggressive young woman, and a narrative that threatens drastic change for one that proves reassuringly static. (127)

Yeazell discusses how, in order to become a vehicle of redemption for Felix Holt, Esther Lyon must forgo her own social ambitions and pretentious gentility. Esther Lyon gives up her social ambition so that she might have a greater power: womanly influence.[19] However, in her analysis of Esther's transformation--from a social climber to a self-effacing heroine, who willingly gives up her inheritance--Yeazell ignores the importance of Mrs. Transome as a negative example of frustrated feminine ambition.

The novel proposes a carefully-constructed code of feminine influence, one that Esther learns through the course of the novel and Mrs. Transome fails to achieve. The novel shows that Esther's choice to marry Felix Holt is based on her desire to escape the fate of Mrs. Transome, a woman whose ambitions and transgressions have made her entirely dependent upon two despotic men: Jermyn, her former lover, and Harold, her son. Mrs. Transome describes her relationships with men by using the language of slavery:

> There was that possibility of fierce insolence in this man who was to pass with those nearest to her as her indebted servant, but *whose brand she secretly bore.*

> She was as powerless with him as she was with her son. (203 emphasis mine)

Mrs. Transome foresees that, if Esther marries Harold, she, too, will enter into a role of bondage:

> This girl has a fine spirit--plenty of fire and pride and wit. *Men like such captives*, as they like horses that champ the bit and paw the ground: they feel more triumph in their mastery. What is the use of a woman's will? (488, emphasis mine)

Esther, whose beauty and refinement had encouraged her aspirations of becoming a gentlewoman, rejects the role of Mrs. Transome, in part because she realizes that despite his courtly attentions, Harold Transome is not subject to "feminine influence." Although Harold Transome shows signs of being influenced by Esther's English femininity, his illegitimacy marks him as beyond redeeming.

Esther represents a reformation of Mrs. Transome's upper-class femininity. Initially, she is vain, graceful, and haughty, and rules over her father's domestic space without the humble affection that Felix Holt later teaches her:

> In this small dingy house of the minister in Malthouse Yard there was a light-footed, sweet-voiced Queen Esther . . . [who] rules . . . with an air of confidence. . ., [a] blind willfulness that sees no terrors, no many-linked consequences, *no bruises and wounds of those whose cord it tightens* . . . There is a sort of subjection which is the peculiar heritage of largeness and love; and strength is often only another name for willing bondage to irremediable weakness. (160 emphasis mine)

Esther unlearns this form of feminine authority, and in fact she renounces any superiority over her father precisely at the moment that she discovers her true parentage. Esther's

renunciation--her choosing of Felix Holt over Harold Transome and giving up her claims to the Transome estate--involves a realization of the nature of appropriation; in order to claim her inheritance Esther, must displace the Transomes:

> now that her ladyhood was not simply in Utopia, she found herself arrested and *painfully grasped by the means through which the ladyhood was to be obtained*. To her inexperience this strange story of an alienated inheritance, of such a last representative of pure-blooded lineage as old Thomas Transome the bill-sticker, above all of the dispossession hanging over those who actually held, and had expected always to hold, the wealth and position which were suddenly announced to be rightfully hers . . . compelled her to gaze on the degrading hard experience of other human beings, and on [their] humiliating loss. (474 emphasis mine)

Esther rejects the role of "lady" once she realizes that it can be obtained only through the appropriation of someone else's property. Thus, the novel suggests that "ladyhood"--the genteel femininity embodied in Mrs. Transome--involves the imperial violence of invasion and seizure of property.

Although Esther rejects this kind of implied violence, her choice to marry Felix Holt and share in his project of helping the working-class--positions her in a corollary position: the role of the missionary helpmate. Felix Holt's description of his plans to educate the working class employs the rhetoric of the colonial missionary:

> I shall go away as soon as I can to some large town, . . . some ugly, wicked, miserable place. I want to be a demagogue of a new sort; an honest one, if possible, will tell people they are blind and foolish . . . (366)

Esther's role as Felix Holt's wife is to use her femininity to make his civilizing mission more comfortable. She accepts

Felix Holt as her "law" and joins his project of "civilizing" the misguided poor.

Esther Lyon's rejection of Harold Transome and her decision to help Felix in his civilizing mission is a reversal of the romantic resolution Jane Eyre, where the heroine refuses St. John Rivers' proposal and the marries the maimed Rochester. In contrast, Esther does not use her inheritance or her value as the feminine bourgouis principle to rescue Harold Transome.[20] Felix Holt's project of colonizing the poor is analogous to St. John Rivers' missionary work in Africa. Yet in Eliot's novel, the failed colonial adventurer (and second son) is not recuperated by marriage to the heroine, Esther Lyon. Thus, Eliot's text suggests a greater suspicion concerning the possibility of integrating the colonial entrepreneur into the domestic, feminine space.

Esther and Felix become the enforcers of a bourgeois domestic ideology--one that combines radical politics with a code of "English" femininity constructed in opposition to the representations of enslaved oriental woman. However, before this union can take place, Esther is discovered to have an authentic aristocratic lineage. This unravelling of her birth-mystery plot makes middle-class life with Felix a noble choice; what is now revealed to be genuine aristocratic beauty and grace is represented as offering Felix Holt the necessary inspiration.

Notes

1. George Eliot, Felix Holt, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972 (first published 1866). All references to the novel are from this edition.

2. Peter Coveney, "Introduction" to Felix Holt, 7.

3. Esther's testimony at the height of Felix Holt's trial for manslaughter shifts the focus from his actions to his character: "`His nature is very noble; he is tender-hearted; he could never have had any intention that was not brave and good'"(573). It is Esther's judgment of Felix that obtains his pardon.

4. F.R. Leavis 1948:69; Terry Eagleton 1976:117.

5. Henry James, quoted in Haight 1966:42.

6. Deirdre David,"Subversive Sexual Politics," in Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot 1987.

7. David argues that

> from a conventionally powerless position, from the emotional, domestic life to which Eliot confines her, [Mrs. Transome] radically subverts the male world of politics . . . Her private, anarchic desires effectively destroy the public ambitions of her former lover and her intractable son. (200)

8. In chapter one I discuss the figure of the "female schemer" as an imperial adventure in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret. I argue that Lady Audley uses her hyper-femininity to enact a symbolic "colonizing" of the Audley family.

9. Harold Transome exists within a tradition of second sons--like Brontë's Edward Rochester--who are denied an inheritance and therefore must venture into the colonies to earn their fortune.

10. See Gayatri Spivak's article, "Three Women's Texts: A Critique of Imperialism," for a discussion of how the subjectivity of Western heroine is grounded upon the de-humanization of the non-white, colonial woman.

11. Jenny Sharpe, Allegories of Empire: The Figure of the Woman in the Colonial Text, Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1993.

12. "The Giaour," a poem written by Byron in 1813, describes a Byronic hero who falls in love with a female slave. She is killed by her Turkish lord, Hassan, and Giaour avenges her death and then banishes himself to a monastery.

13. Of course, it is perhaps understandable that it is little Harry's maternal lineage which is obscured; a greater emphasis is placed on a character's paternal lineage.

14. See Bernard Porter's, The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1970 (1975), for an analysis of Britain's "informal empire" of the mid-nineteenth century (sometimes referred to as "spheres of influence") as opposed to the annexation or formal political control over colonies that occurred in the eighteen-eighties and nineties.

15. This seems to imply an anxiety concerning the authority of Queen Victoria during this period of British colonialism.

16. In Jane Eyre, the Indian shawl appears on Blanche Ingram's mother, the Dowager Lady Ingram, and it is a manifestation of the wealth that separates Jane from Rochester. When describing the haughty Dowager Lady Ingram Jane remarks on the significance of her wearing an Indian shawl:

> A crimson velvet robe, and a shawl turban of some gold-wrought Indian fabric, invested her (I suppose she thought) with a truly imperial dignity. (161)

In The Semi-Detached House, Captain Hopkinson, an employee of the East India Company, brings Indian shawls home to his wife and daughters, which facilitates their movement from middle to upper class social circles (153).

17. Mr. Transome, Harold's imbecilic father, is described as sleeping with a "soft Oriental scarf which Harold had given him . . . [thrown over his shoulders]," suggesting that he has long ago surrendered his authority to Mrs. Transome.

18. See Susan Meyer's article, "`Safely to Their Own Borders': Proto-Zionism, Feminism, and Nationalism in Daniel Deronda," ELH, 60 (1993): 733-758. Meyers discusses how Gwendolen Harleth's transgressive urges are channelled into Daniel Deronda and she argues that Daniel Deronda's racial otherness is encoded as a feminine difference.

> The proto-Zionism of the novel is the central metaphor through which Eliot simultaneously expunges female impulses to transgress social boundaries and expunges those who penetrate England's national boundaries. The novel ultimately does with the Jews, . . . precisely what it does with female transgressiveness: it firmly ushers both out of the English world of the novel, it returns

> those who have strayed and transgresses, it removes them, in the euphemistic language of the novel, "safely to their own borders." (734-5)

19. See Alison Booth's article, "Not All Men Are Selfish and Cruel: Felix Holt as a Feminist Novel." Booth argues that Felix Holt represents George Eliot's belief in "an ideology of influence," in which "women's vocation for sympathy [becomes] a basis for social reform" (144).

20. Both Harold Transome and Edward Rochester are second sons who are forced into the colonial sphere to make their fortune; both return to England wealthy but contaminated by their relationships with non-English women. In both novels, the English heroine is offered as their chance for redemption.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

This dissertation broadens the study of how nineteenth-century literature is implicated within and contributes to the discourse of imperialism. This study goes beyond analyzing texts which are set within the colonial territory and explores the ways that colonialism is represented in popular women's fiction of the mid nineteenth-century. Along with the recent works of other critics, this study investigates how issues of colonialism are contained within the unlikely sites of the domestic and sensational novel. How do these "women's" novels, many of them best-sellers, and all of them set within scenes of English domesticity, reflect issues of colonialism? This study shows that the colonial project permeated even these forms of "feminine" popular culture. One assumption which has grounded this work is that the domestic/national/ feminine/literary sphere cannot remain separate from realm of the colonial/international/"male"/political.

My study focuses on texts which, with the exception of Jane Eyre, were written by women during the eighteen-sixties, and which contain both explicit and implicit references to the colonial sphere. These texts reveal a heterogeneity of discourses; however, there exist common tropes--the failure of

the colonial adventurer, the woman's metaphoric colonial adventuring, the slippage between representing women as colonizers and as colonized, and the contamination of the domestic sphere by colonialism. These tropes signal an anxiety concerning the implied violence of colonialism, an anxiety which manifests itself in images of murder, domestic overthrow, mutilation, and illegitimacy.

This study of mid-eighteenth-century novels is certainly not exhaustive; further work needs to be done to determine how issues of colonialism are represented in other mid-Victorian novels and to discern if texts written by women approach these issues in a unique manner. My selection of solely women writers would seem to suggest an a priori judgement that novels written by women share certain distinctive characteristics; however, I believe that an expansion of this study could fruitfully include novels written by men which are set within the domestic sphere, or are designated "sensational" novels.

In addition, the issues explored in this dissertation have implications for studies of contemporary popular culture. If mid-nineteenth-century British novels are implicated within the context of colonialism, then certainly late twentieth-century forms of popular culture--soap opera, Harlequin novels, women's magazines--can be examined within the context of the "post-colonial," yet not post-imperial, historical context.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aeron Haynie was educated at the State University of New York at Binghampton and the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she graduated with a B.A., summa cum laude. She received her Master's in 1990 from the University of Florida.

She is presently an assistant professor at Western Montana College of the University of Montana.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Elizabeth Langland, Chair
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Alistair M. Duckworth
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Daniel A. Cottom
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Patricia B. Craddock
Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Louise M. Newman
Assistant Professor of History

This thesis was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Richard J. Lutz

Dean, Graduate School
December, 1994